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# MIRROR OF BERYL

*A Historical Introduction to Tibetan Medicine*

Desi Sangye Gyatso

Translated by Gavin Kilty

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# General Editor's Preface

It is a joy and a source of deep satisfaction to see the publication in English today of *Mirror of Beryl*, an important classic of Tibetan literature composed by the prolific seventeenth-century author Desi Sangyé Gyatso. A historical work outlining the various strands in the development of Tibet's rich system of medical science, profiling the major figures and texts, the book also contains a detailed commentary on the three sets of Buddhist vows and a discussion of the ideal relationship between master physician and disciple. This book is one of three key works composed by Desi on the Tibetan medical system, the other two being the two-volume exposition of the four medical tantras entitled *Blue Beryl*, and *A Sword to Cut the Noose of Untimely Death*, an important work on diagnosis and treatment methods. From a literary-historical point of view, one of the greatest values of *Mirror of Beryl* is its meticulous recording and citing of numerous important works on medicine, many of which are no longer extant.

Among Tibet's great classical authors, Desi's position is unique. Though not a monk, he was groomed by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama from an early age, and he acquired in this way an impressive intellectual and cultural education—eclectic in its breadth and steeped in the love of poetry and literature that was a hallmark of the Great Fifth. Taking over rule of Tibet as regent following the Great Fifth's death, Desi saw through the construction of the monumental reliquary of his predecessor inside the Potala Palace, penned the conclusion of the Great Fifth's acclaimed autobiography, *Silken Robe*, and more importantly, took charge of discovering and bringing up of the Sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso. The fates of these two figures—the loyal regent and the young incarnation of his mentor—would become intertwined in a profound tragedy involving the unfortunate death of both. Often the full extent of Desi's contribution to Tibet's rich intellectual heritage is not appreciated. So to see Desi's *Mirror of Beryl* featured in *The Library of Tibetan Classics* is, for me at least, a source of special satisfaction.

Two primary objectives have driven the creation and development of *The Library of Tibetan Classics*. The first aim is to help revitalize the appreciation and the study of the Tibetan classical heritage within Tibetan-speaking communities worldwide. The younger generation in particular struggle with the tension between traditional Tibetan culture and the realities of modern consumerism. To this end, efforts have been made to develop a comprehensive yet manageable body of texts, one that features the works of Tibet's best-known authors and covers the gamut of classical Tibetan knowledge. The second objective of *The Library of Tibetan Classics* is to help make these texts part of global literary and intellectual heritage. In this regard, we have tried to make the English translation reader-friendly and, as much as possible, keep the body of the text free of scholarly apparatus, which can intimidate general readers. For specialists who wish to compare the translation with the Tibetan original, page references of the critical edition of the Tibetan text are provided in brackets.

The texts in this thirty-two-volume series span more than a millennium—from the development of the Tibetan script in the seventh century to the first part of the twentieth century, when Tibetan society and culture first encountered industrial modernity. The volumes are thematically organized and cover many of the categories of classical Tibetan knowledge—from the teachings specific to each Tibetan school to the classical works on philosophy, psychology, and phenomenology. The first category includes teachings of the Kadam, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü, Geluk, and Jonang schools, of miscellaneous Buddhist lineages, and of the Bön school. The texts in these volumes have been selected largely by senior lineage holders of the individual schools. Texts in the other categories have been selected primarily in recognition of the historical reality of the individual disciplines. For example, in the field of epistemology, works from the Sakya and Geluk schools have been selected, while the volume on buddha nature features the writings of Butön Rinchen Drup and various Kagyü masters. Where fields are of more common interest, such as the three codes of conduct or the bodhisattva ideal, efforts have been made to present the perspectives of all four major schools. *The Library of Tibetan Classics* can function as a comprehensive library of the Tibetan literary heritage for libraries, educational and cultural institutions, and interested individuals.

I offer my deep gratitude first and foremost to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for always being such a shining exemplar and an advocate of Tibet's great classical heritage. I thank the translator of this volume, Gavin Kilty,

for doing such a magnificent job in making this important work accessible to the modern reader. In Gavin I have found a real comrade, someone who is always ready to take on the most arduous of the translation projects from *The Library of Tibetan Classics* and then proceeds with remarkable efficiency and success. I owe heartfelt thanks to David Kittelstrom of Wisdom Publications for being, as usual, a most incisive editor; to the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, for providing full access to its library to my Tibetan colleagues who created the critical edition of the Tibetan text; and to my wife, Sophie Boyer-Langri, for taking on the numerous administrative chores that are part of such a collaborative project. Finally, I express my heartfelt thanks to Curt and Alice Jones, who most generously provided the funding for this translation project, the Ing Foundation for its grant for publishing this volume, and to the Hershey Family Foundation for its longstanding support of the Institute of Tibetan Classics, without which *The Library of Tibetan Classics* series simply would not have become a reality.

It is my sincere hope that the publication of this volume will benefit many and that it will provide a valuable resource to help people better understand and appreciate the richness of Tibet's classical intellectual and spiritual heritage. May the efforts of all those who have been part of this endeavor help alleviate the sufferings of all beings; may they especially help us humans become wiser so that we may make this world a more caring and a more peaceful place for all.

Thupten Jinpa
Montreal, 2009

# Translator's Introduction

THE MEDICAL SYSTEM referred to as "Tibetan medicine" has found its way from its longtime home in Tibet to many parts of the modern world, where it has settled successfully alongside other alternative systems of medical practice. Physicians trained in this medical system and offering traditional Tibetan treatments can now be found in many countries worldwide. Moreover not all practitioners of this medical system are Tibetan nationals; its theory and methodology have attracted students from other countries. Many books have appeared on Tibetan medicine, most offering an overview of its theory and practices, a few giving brief accounts of its history, and even one or two presenting translations of medical texts.[1]

*Mirror of Beryl* is a detailed traditional account of the origins, theoretical bases, and practices of this ancient and wide-ranging medical system. It was composed by Desi Sangyé Gyatso (1653–1705), a student of the Fifth Dalai Lama and, beginning in 1679, his political successor as well. Much of the historical narrative in the introduction below is summarized from Sangyé Gyatso's text, a work that, from the time it was written at the beginning of the eighteenth century, has been regarded as the leading authority on the development of medicine in Tibet.[2]

## *Origins of the Tibetan Medical System*

Tibetan medicine as it is practiced today is closely connected with Tibetan Buddhism, but its roots may predate the arrival of the Buddhadharma in Tibet in the seventh and eighth centuries. Some commentators mention the existence of a system of medicine—crediting it with varying degrees of sophistication—within the indigenous Bön or pre-Buddhist culture that flourished in Tibet. Kachuwa Chölothar, for example, in his hitherto untranslated analysis on the origins of Tibetan medicine, puts forward evidence for the existence of a Bön medical system.[3] Some Bön documents say that their founder,

Tönpa Shenrap, who was contemporaneous with the Buddha, preached thirteen volumes of medical teachings. One work on Bön history claims his son Chebu Trishé memorized 21,000 medical works.

In Darmo Menrampa's (1638–1710) *Brilliant Jewel Treasury*, in answer to a question from an Indian doctor on the kinds of medical practice in Tibet, the eighth-century medical scholar Yuthok mentions medical texts on purgatives, fomentation, balneology, and ointments found in the Shangshung Bön and Yungdrung Bön traditions. Also, *Four Tantras*,[4] the principal medical reference and subject of study in Tibetan medical training up to the present day, contains a few names of medicines, medicinal compounds, and illnesses that are said to be from the ancient Shangshung language. The concluding chapter of *Four Tantras* lists mantras that come from Bön religious practice. Some commentators have even suggested that *Four Tantras* itself is of Bön origin, and that the translator Vairocana, rather than translating it from Indian sources as others have suggested, took it from Bön medical literature. Kachuwa Chölothar says that these days many scholars recognize several principles taught in *Four Tantras* as being developments of the basic medical practices that existed during the Bön phase of Tibetan history.

From the seventh century onward, evidence suggests that Tibetan medicine developed from three distinct non-indigenous sources. A passage from a work called *Weapons of Fearlessness*, cited in *Mirror of Beryl*,[5] talks of three great medical systems, and that ignorance of any of them would exclude one from being counted among the great physicians. The passage continues by naming the purveyors of these systems in Tibet as Bharadhaja, Galenos, and Hsüan Yüan Huang. These three physicians, says Desi Sangyé Gyatso, came respectively from India, "Trom," and China. India, as is clear from the extensive accounts of Āyurvedic medical literature and practices, is easily identifiable as the Indian subcontinent. China during the seventh century, when these physicians were in Tibet, was under the Tang dynasty with its capital at Chang-an (Xian). The third locale is harder to identify.

Much has been written on the identification of Trom *(khrom* or *phrom)*. Geographically, it seems to refer to the Central Asian lands west of Tibet whose inroads into Tibet were via the Silk Route. Culturally, it seems to refer to the Greek or Persian culture that had permeated so far east by the eighth century. It can be no coincidence that the Galenos from Trom named above bore the same name as the celebrated Greek physician who graced the Roman courts in the second century B.C.E. Because of this, Beckwith identifies Trom with Rome.[6] Desi Sangé Gyatso and others equate Trom with Taksik *(stag*

*gzigs, ta zig)*, which is tempting to identify with Tajikistan. However, the *Five Chronicles*, cited by Jampa Trinlé,[7] disputes the identity of Trom with Taksik, stating that Taksik is in the west and Trom in the north. Trinlé goes on to say that some commentators place Taksik to the west of Xinjiang and north of Afghanistan, and that the Bön tradition speaks of regions called Taksik Trom and Taksik Olmo Lungring. Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa talks of the "Hor (Mongolians) similar to the barbarian Taksik or Turks."[8] It may be that there is an overlap between Trom and the ancient land of Shangshung, from whence came the Bön practices. One of the medicines listed in *Four Tantras* mentioned above is *daryakan*, a name said to be from the Shangshung language. This is an ambrosia-like panacea with twenty-five types. However, according to Beckwith:

> The word *daryakan* is patently non-Tibetan in origin, and it is in fact said by Jampal Dorjé to be a Shangshung term. His etymology is rendered most probable in the light of the form *taryak*, the name of a "Persian" remedy for snake-bite in Swat, land of ancient Shangshung and Tibetan cultural contacts. Since there can be no doubt but that taryak is identical to *teryak* or *deryak*, i.e., Arabic *tiryaq(un)* or *diryaq(un)*, Islamic forms of the word theriac, then (regardless of the actual pathways followed by the drug's name on its way to Tibet) it is undoubtedly also true that *daryakan* was originally the compound drug theriac, a very ancient Greek medicinal concoction (*theriakon harmakon*, or *theriake*), prepared with snake's flesh, honey, and numerous other ingredients. Theriac proper was ordinarily a cure-all, but was supposed to be especially good against snake-bite.[9]

These three sources, or "great rivers," brought their own strains of medical knowledge to Tibet. It seems that Trom in the west, personified by the physician Galenos, brought much anatomical knowledge to Tibet during those early times, in the form of medical works on dissection. Galenos himself stayed on in Tibet and composed several medical works. Through his sons his medical lineage grew and flourished. This medical influence from the west seems to have been predominant around the time of Songtsen Gampo, as evidenced by the fact that Galenos and another physician, Tsenpashilaha, also from Trom, were rewarded with titles and commendations from the king. Tsenpashilaha was also known as Biji, and the lineage of Galenos was

known as the Biji lineage, and according to Beckwith, this term is a transcription of a Sogdian word meaning "doctor."[10] In the succeeding centuries, the Trom influence seems to have waned.

The influence of China in medical matters also appears to have been dominant in the seventh and eighth centuries in Tibet and may have lasted longer than the Trom influence. The Chinese bride of Songtsen Gampo brought an extensive medical text with her from China as a gift for the king. This was translated into Tibetan by Hvashang Mahādeva and Dharmakośa. Later, in the eighth century, the Chinese queen of Jangtsa Lhabön brought many medical and astrological works to Tibet. The Chinese translators Hvashang Mahāyāna, Hvashang Mahākyinda, Hsüan Yüan Huang, and Hvashang Penatseta compiled and translated many medical texts in to Tibetan. These include the renowned *Somarāja*, whose influence was still evident in the seventeenth century, when Desi Sangyé Gyatso included its teachings on diagnoses from urine and cauterization points in his famous collections of medical paintings. Trinlé states (p. 31) that the great physician, the later Yuthok Yönten Gönpo, in the eleventh century incorporated some of the principles of *Somarāja* into the edition of *Four Tantras* that he was supplementing. Dr. Tsering Thakchoe Drungtso, in his recent *Tibetan Medicine: The Healing Science of Tibet*, also describes urine diagnostic techniques taken from the *Somarāja*.[11]

*Somarāja*, translated from Chinese and sometimes attributed to Nāgārjuna, includes chapters on many of the principal treatments found in Tibetan medicine to this day, including purgatives, emetics, channel cleansing, pulse and urine analysis, enemas, suppositories, and bloodletting. However, it also has a chapter on *daryakan*, which, as asserted above, is of Shangshung derivation. Therefore, it cannot be established that this work or other Chinese compositions are the sources of these diagnostic techniques or therapies. Nevertheless, a passage from *Four Tantras* cited in *Mirror of Beryl* states that cauterization and channel cleansing come primarily from China.[12] Also, several works translated from the Chinese deal with pulse and urine analysis. Dr. Tsering Thakchoe Drungtso stresses the differences between traditional Chinese and Tibetan medicine, while admitting similarities in medical theory and practices as well as in diagnostic techniques. Urine divination techniques using a turtle grid described by Dr. Drungtso are distinctly Chinese.

The influence of the Indian or Āyurveda medical system in Tibet was more extensive. From the eighth century onward, inspired by the aspirations of King Trisong Detsen, Tibetan translators and scholars visited India

regularly in pursuit of Buddhist literature and teachings. In doing so they brought back compositions on medicine by great practitioners of Āyurveda. The translator Vairocana in the eighth century traveled to India and translated many works on medicine, astronomy, and the Great Perfection, among other topics. According to those who hold it to be of Indian origin, he was the translator of *Four Tantras*. The *Lotus Chronicles*, cited in *Mirror of Beryl*, said of him:

> Never has there been a translator like Vairocana,
> and there never will be again.
> In the future those who speak the languages of India
> may be called translators,
> but they will come nowhere near Vairocana.
> He was called a translator,
> in reality he was a pandit.
> Generations hence will look on his work
> with immense gratitude.[13]

Translator Rinchen Sangpo in the tenth century also traveled to India. He translated *Essence of Eight Branches* by Śūra, or Vāgbhaṭa, and its extensive commentary *Moonlight* by the Kashmiri Candranandana. These are found in the Tengyur, the canon of works by Indian masters translated into Tibetan, and became widespread and influential in the medical systems of Tibet. The physician Shangtön Siji Bar in the eleventh century also journeyed to India and returned with many teachings on medicine. Indian physicians also visited Tibet where they introduced various traditions. The last physician to visit Tibet from India was reputed to be Pandit Vanaratna in the fifteenth century.

The Tengyur includes about twenty-two translations of Indian medical works. These include compositions on comprehensive theory and practice of the eight branches of Āyurveda, works on herbal preparations, elixirs, and the alchemical preparation of mercury, and even a veterinary work on the treatment of horses.

Of these Indian compositions, the *Essence of Eight Branches* or *Treatise of Eight Branches (Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṃhitanāma)* is regarded within Indian Āyurveda as one of the great works on medicine. The eight branches of Āyurveda are: physical or internal disorders *(kāya)*, children's disorders *(bāla)*, women's disorders *(mātṛ roga)*, demonic disorders *(bhūta vidyā)*,

surgery for injuries from weapons or wounds *(śalyatantra)*, antidotes to poisons *(agada)*, remedies for aging *(jarā)*, and aphrodisiacs and cures for impotence *(vājikaraṇa)*. The same or very similar eight branches are mentioned in *Four Tantras* as subjects to be studied.

A passage in *Four Tantras* describing the origins of the branches of Tibetan medicine says that India was mainly responsible for the preparation or compounding of medicinal plants and minerals. Medicinal substances used as ingredients in compounds are chosen for the powers and tastes effective in combating disorders. These disorders in turn are classified according to their basic cause, which is a disturbance, excess, or depletion of the three humors *(doṣa)*, which are wind *(vāyu, vāta)*, bile *(pitta)*, and phlegm *(kapha)*. Therefore, renowned Indian medical works, such as *Eight Branches*, the *Caraka Saṃhita*, and the *Suśruta Saṃhita*, describe in detail the three-humor pathology, the powers and tastes of single-ingredient medicines, and the compounding of these ingredients. Such detail is mirrored in *Four Tantras* and other indigenous Tibetan medical compositions. The five therapies *(pañcakarma)* renowned in Āyurveda have also found their way into the Tibetan medical system and are described in *Four Tantras*.

Therefore, the principal origins of the medical system in Tibet were those of the indigenous Bön culture, the Greco-Arab cultures to the west, China, and India. Other sources of influence can also be detected. Tibetan sources talk of the "nine royal physicians from surrounding countries." Alongside Trom, China, and India, these surrounding countries include Kashmir, Drugu,[14] Dolpo,[15] and Nepal. Other sources talk of ten medical traditions, listing Khotan, Minyak, Hor or Mongolia, and Oḍḍiyāna in addition to the above.

## *Four Tantras*

The full name of *Four Tantras* is *Essence of Ambrosia Secret-Instruction Tantra on Eight Branches*. This work is the bible of the Tibetan medical science and is met with great praise from all established Tibetan medical traditions. As a single text it contains four main sections or tantras. The first or Root Tantra is an enumeration and overview of the chapters of the other three tantras and an introduction to the three-humor theory. The second or Explanatory Tantra covers embryology, physiology of the human body, causes and classification of disease, diet, medicines, diagnosis, criteria for becoming a doctor, and so on. The third or Instruction Tantra is primarily a comprehensive

medical manual for the treatment of specific disorders. The fourth or Final Tantra covers pulse and urine diagnosis; various medicine forms such as pills, pastes, decoctions, powders, mineral medicines; the five cleansing therapies, such as purgatives and emetics; and the five external therapies, such as bloodletting and cauterization.

The format of these tantras is that of a dialogue. Rishi Manasija, a manifestation of the Buddha's speech, requests the individual chapters from Rishi Vidyājñāna, the manifestation of Buddha's mind. A rishi *(ṛṣi)* is a sage, and *Four Tantras* is a tantra not in the commonly understood sense as an esoteric Vajrayana manual, but in its other meaning of "treatise," especially as one on the ancient sciences of India, such as medicine, grammar, and the arts. Throughout the tantra, Medicine Buddha, although present, is silent. The discourse takes place in the beautiful medicine city of Sudarśana, surrounded by the four medicine mountains of Gandhamārdana, Himavat, Vindhya, and Malaya or Malabar. The audience consists of Buddhist and non-Buddhist gods usually associated with India, such as Avalokiteśvara, Brahmā, etc., as well as human and celestial physicians and rishis.

At first glance this great medical work appears to be a standard Indian composition or teaching of the Buddha that was eventually translated into Tibetan. The surroundings and the audience are distinctly Indian in name and description. All four mountains are identifiable as ranges in the east, north, middle, and the western ghats of India. All the rishis present in the audience are found in ancient Indian literature. However, a sizeable number of Tibetan medical scholars doubt its Indian origins. They point out that although the text follows generally the principles of the eight branches of Āyurveda, much of the content of the medical work is deliberately geared toward the climate and environment of Tibet. Some chapters, such as those on pulse and urine diagnosis, are decidedly non-Indian. They claim that certain substances mentioned in the text such as white china bowls and tea were not in existence during the time of the Buddha. Substances such as yak meat and roasted barley porridge are distinctly Tibetan foods. Even the clothing described is Tibetan in style. The references to the mother-son and friend-enemy cycles in the chapter on pulse analysis follow the thinking of the *Somarāja*, which was translated from the Chinese. Moreover, there is no reference to this work in the great canon of translations from India—the Kangyur and Tengyur—and there is no trace of there ever having been a Sanskrit version of the text.

These doubts have given rise to much debate and discussion over the

centuries as to the author or authors of *Four Tantras*. Some commentators consider it to be primarily the word of the Buddha with additions and supplementary material by the later Yuthok. The identification of Sudarśana, its place of teaching, has been identified with Bodhgāya in northern India or Oḍḍiyāna in the west of India. Others maintain it is solely a Tibetan composition, the author being variously the eighth-century translator Vairocana, the elder and younger Yuthok, or the eleventh-century treasure revealer Drapa Ngönshé. Desi Sangyé Gyatso, the author of this work, asserts that *Four Tantras* was originally taught in Oḍḍiyāna (often identified with the Swat Valley in Pakistan) by the Buddha manifest as the blue Medicine Buddha. It was preserved, some say as a treasure later revealed by Nāgārjuna and Śūra, and eventually translated and brought to Tibet by Vairocana. From there it was either concealed in a pillar at Samyé Monastery by King Trisong Detsen or his son to be revealed later by Drapa Ngönshé, or passed on through Padmasambhava as a part of the Transmission tradition. Eventually it came into the hands of the later Yuthok, who revised the work and supplemented it with other medical traditions existing in Tibet at that time, thereby attuning it to the demands of the Tibetan environment.

Most modern Tibetan scholars maintain the tantra to be primarily the work of Yuthok the elder and younger. Troru Tsenam, for example, says that Yuthok the elder took the medical translations made by Vairocana as a basis, added much from his own experience and from the teachings he received from the Kashmiri Candranandana, together with already established indigenous Tibetan medical science, and produced an early version of *Four Tantras*. This was concealed as a treasure to be later revealed by Drapa Ngönshé and finally reaching Yuthok the younger. Taking this composition as a basis, he supplemented it with teachings from the Āyurvedic *Essence of Eight Branches* and its commentary and added medical practices and oral-tradition techniques that had developed in Tibet since the time of his ancestor. This work was undertaken accompanied by a pure vision of Medicine Buddha and takes the form of a question-and-answer dialogue between Rishi Manasija and Rishi Vidyājñāna in the manifested medical city of Sudarśana. Because of these exalted credentials, Troru Tsenam says, this work is inseparable from the teachings of the Buddha himself.[16]

Other scholars diverge in various ways from this account, but all Tibetan medical practitioners agree that this composition is the foundation on which later medical science in Tibet was built. The work's creation may well be the major turning point in the history of Tibetan medicine, when it went from

being a purely derivative tradition to being an innovator of medical science in its own right.

## *Buddhist Influence*

As we have seen, the origins of the medical system in Tibet were by no means exclusively Buddhist. Medical practices from the old Bön culture and from the Greco-Arab traditions, for instance, were clearly not Buddhist. Although many of the medical texts translated from India begin with homage to Medicine Buddha, Āyurveda itself is said to predate the Buddha, and to have begun at the instigation of the god Brahmā, and developed by the god Indra, the rishis, and brahman-caste physicians. Nevertheless, medicine arrived in a Tibet that was embracing the Buddhist doctrine, and the science and the religion have become linked. Such a relationship between medicine and religion was inevitable in the world before the advent of modern scientific thinking, and Tibet was no exception.

Buddhism teaches that the root of all suffering lies in ignorance, aversion, and desire. These three states of mind are known as the *three poisons*, depicted in paintings of the wheel of life as a pig, snake, and chicken, respectively. Illness is an obvious form of suffering. Therefore, although Tibetan medical texts place the three humors at the root of all disease, the deeper root is that of the three poisons. The deep root of phlegm disorder is the pig-like poison of ignorance. The root of bile disorder is the snake-like poison of aversion or anger. The root of wind disorder is the chicken-like poison of desire.

With Buddhism as its spiritual philosophy, Tibetan medicine says that the true path to perfect and permanent health is Buddhist practice aimed at eliminating the three poisons, whereas following medical treatments can alleviate the suffering of illness only temporarily as long as the three poisons reside in the mind. The Buddha is the culmination and final accomplishment of Buddhist practice and is therefore permanently free of any humor imbalance or illness. The accounts in scripture of the Buddha becoming sick toward the end of his life are thus interpreted as mere displays of illness for a pedagogical purpose.

According to the Mahayana Buddhism of Tibet, a buddha is the product of the wisdom of omniscience, total compassion, and unobstructed power. Therefore, a buddha would not only know every disease, the cause of every disease, and the perfect remedy for every disease, but would work effortlessly and compassionately to free living beings of disease. For having such wisdom

and compassion, the Buddha is said to be the perfect physician. Desi Sangyé Gyatso himself states:

> The physician who eliminates desire, aversion, and confusion, the ignorance that causes these three poisons, together with the wind, bile, and phlegm disorders that result from the three poisons is the blessed Buddha. He is the physician surpassed by no one.

Because of the unobstructed power of this perfect physician, the Buddha is appealed to in his form as Medicine Buddha. Many ritual-based meditative practices and initiations have appeared, focusing on Medicine Buddha, that aim to enhance the physician's power, overcome disease, lengthen lifespan, and so on. One of the most famous of these is Yuthok Yönten Gönpo's *Heartdrop.* This work describes the initiation or empowerment processes in great detail, including, for example, the medical instruments initiation and the ambrosia longevity initiation, followed by the associated generation and completion-stage practices. With these features, it is a practice on a par with those of highest yoga tantra.

In the practice of Mahayana Buddhism, knowledge is pursued to better equip ourselves to help others. On this bodhisattva path, knowledge of the science of medicine is considered a necessary supplement. Because of this, even those who are not medical practitioners will request and receive the Medicine Buddha initiation, with the aim of planting the seeds for future skill in healing. Others will request and receive the initiation when ill in order to supplement medical treatment. It is not an uncommon practice for those suffering from illness to recite with deep faith the Medicine Buddha mantra or to visualize Medicine Buddha at the site of the illness. There are many recorded testimonials to these rituals' efficacy.

The doctrine of karma is a central pillar of Buddhist philosophy. Essentially, this doctrine preaches that all thoughts and deeds leave imprints on the stream of consciousness that intended them, and those imprints ripen in this and future lives in diverse ways. Our body type, with its strengths and weaknesses and its general constitution, the fortunes and misfortunes we meet through life, and even the environments we find ourselves in, all have their root causes in thoughts and deeds carried out in previous lives. The immediate circumstances that may precipitate pain and pleasure are regarded as mere conditions or triggers that cause the karmic effects to ripen.

Sickness is often brought on by immediate circumstances and conditions

Gyalsang, whose lineage ultimately merged into the Sakya medical lineage; Nyawa Chösang, whose lineage continued well into the time of Desi Sangyé Gyatso in the seventeenth century; and Yuthok Yönten Gönpo the elder.

Yuthok was an almost mythical figure who had made a striking impression as a young man during a conference of foreign doctors held at Samyé Monastery under the auspices of the king. In later years he traveled to India and to other lands to seek out medical teachings, which he brought back to Tibet. Once he brought back from his travels a statue of Medicine Buddha specially made for him by the supernatural serpent-like creatures called *nāgas* in gratitude for curing their queen. This statue was still in the Potala palace in Lhasa in the seventeenth century during the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, who prayed before it when suffering with an eye condition and met a successful outcome. Yuthok was the composer of many a work on medicine and founded the first medical college in Kongpo. He is said to have lived 125 years.

Yuthok Yönten Gönpo the younger was a descendent of the elder Yuthok and was born in the eleventh century. Although preceded by several great physicians, such as Drapa Ngönshé, Shangtön Siji Bar, and his own mentor, Roktön Könchok Kyap, his contribution to establishing medicine as a truly Tibetan science was immense. His prolific output of teaching and composition established what were among the first son and disciple medical lineages in Tibet. He reputedly traveled to India six times. He is spoken of in glowing terms as a true incarnation of Medicine Buddha. The Fifth Dalai Lama said of him:

> Fusion of all buddha families of the three enlightened bodies,
> the lord of medicine, Vajradhara,
> in the dance performed according to the minds of disciples,
> appears the one renowned as Yuthok Yönten Gönpo,
> in reality the naturally arising lord of myriad mandalas.[18]

He was especially influential in the propagation of *Four Tantras* (or, according to many commentators, its composition).

## *Consolidation of Medical Science after Yuthok*

The later Yuthok Yönten Gönpo left a disciple lineage that begins with the great twelfth-century physician Sumtön Yeshé Sung, as well as a lineage

beginning with his son that includes Palden Tsojé of the famous Drangti lineage; the celebrated royal physician Minyima Thongwa Dönden, of the Jang lineage; and Tashi Palsang, in whom the Treasure and Transmission lineages of *Four Tantras* combined.

As well as producing one lineage of *Four Tantras*, the revealed Treasure tradition produced a wealth of oral-instruction treatments for a variety of disorders. The most famous of these are the medical treasures revealed by Guru Chökyi Wangchuk and Dorbum Chökyi Drakpa.

The fifteenth century saw the dawn of two of the greatest medical lineages in Tibet—the Jang and the Sur. The Jang tradition began with Jangpa Namgyal Draksang, whose aristocratic father had been honored by the Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan. In later years he himself was awarded the title of Tai Situ by the emperor. He wrote many authoritative works and was especially knowledgeable on the Kālacakra tantra. He had both tantric disciples, including the famous Palden Chökyong, and medical disciples, including Minyima Thongwa Dönden.

The Sur lineage began with Surkhar Nyamnyi Dorjé. It is said that he received a vision of Yuthok, who gave him oral-tradition teachings and pointed out where later commentators had erred in their understanding of *Four Tantras* and Yuthok's *Heartdrop*. His compositions included many definitive reference works on the tastes, powers, post-digestive tastes, natures, etymologies, and functions of various medicines, as well as the famous *Relic of Millions*, a vast collection of oral-tradition treatments. He was also a dedicated practitioner of tantra and often meditated naked from the waist up using meditation straps to hold his posture. His lineage has produced many worthy physicians. These include Surkhar Lodrö Gyalpo, who produced the first major redaction of *Four Tantras* and some other works that, while not highly regarded by Desi Sangyé Gyatso, were nonetheless quite influential.

## *Desi Sangyé Gyatso*

Both these lineages were eventually merged by Desi Sangyé Gyatso, the author of the present work, in the seventeenth century during the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Ngawang Losang Gyatso, the Fifth Dalai Lama, was not a physician, nor did he concentrate on the study of medicine, but he made a significant contribution to the growth and establishment of this science through patronizing medical schools, encouraging the publication of

medical works, arranging the translation of Indian texts, inviting Tibetan physicians from far away to pass on their oral traditions, and generally seeing that all conducive conditions for the above were in place. This he was able to do because of the great political power he now possessed, having nullified the challenge of the Tsang rulers to the west of Lhasa with the help of the Mongolian chieftain Gushri Khan.

Desi Sangyé Gyatso had looked at the redaction of *Four Tantras* made by Surkhar Lodrö Gyalpo, decided that it was not up to standard, and suggested to the Dalai Lama that he attempt a new redaction. He also came to the conclusion, contrary to other opinion at the time, that the Jang and Sur lineages were not incompatible. Therefore, beginning around 1690, he set to work on producing a new and revised edition of *Four Tantras*, using a variety of source and reference works; a comprehensive commentary to *Four Tantras*, known as *Blue Beryl;* and a supplement to the Instruction Tantra, the longest of the four tantras. These works form a substantial basis of the study of Tibetan medicine even today. He was also responsible for commissioning a remarkable collection of seventy-nine annotated medical and anatomical paintings that illustrate the chapters of *Four Tantras*. These are still extant and have been published in book form.[19]

In 1696, inspired by a vision of the site as resembling Sudarśana and motivated by the wishes of the Fifth Dalai Lama, who had by then passed away, he founded the famous medical college on Chakpo Hill in Lhasa. There he would sometimes teach the classes himself, and he established the annual expedition to neighboring areas to identify medical plants. He also had great expertise in astrology and composed *White Beryl*, an authoritative work on all aspects of astronomical and elemental calculation and divination practiced in Tibet at that time. Although he was not a trained physician, he was without doubt an extraordinary scholar, and lived an extraordinary life.

He was born near Lhasa in 1653 as a descendent of Desi Trinlé Gyatso, a former viceroy of the Dalai Lama. He came into contact with the Dalai Lama at a very young age. According to the short account of his life by Dr. Losang Tenzin, when the Dalai Lama visited his family, the four-year-old child clung on to the Dalai Lama's robe and wanted to go away with him.[20] From the age of eight he was part of the retinue of the Fifth Dalai Lama, who conferred upon him the layman's vows. Despite depictions of him as an ordained monk, Desi Sangyé Gyatso remained a layman his entire life, something he makes very clear in the present work. From the age of eight he spent much of his time in the Dalai Lama's presence, benefiting from his vast knowledge.

Although he studied with other teachers, the Fifth Dalai Lama became his root guru and bestowed on him many tantra empowerments.

In 1679 the Dalai Lama retired from political life and handed over the reins of power to Desi Sangyé Gyatso, who was only twenty-six years old. And it was a considerable power to fall on such young shoulders. A legal inscription stating that this young man was to be regarded as of equal political status to the Dalai Lama can still be seen in the Potala palace.

He seems to have been very thorough in his administration of the country's institutions. With the monasteries of Ganden, Sera, Drepung, Tashi Lhünpo, and Mindröling, he overhauled and reviewed their monastic regulations, estates, and sources of income. In the lay community he conducted a census of households and levied taxes where appropriate. In the government he set up many new institutions.

The consolidation of Tibet as a land under a single power residing in the Potala palace at Lhasa was not yet forty years old. Because of this, together with the perceived designs of the Manchu and the instability among the Mongolians, not to mention other internal disputes, the young ruler of Tibet, in keeping with the wishes of the Fifth, decided to conceal from the Tibetan community the death of the Dalai Lama four years later. This secret was maintained for about thirteen years. By the time it was revealed in 1694, the incarnation of the Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso, was already eleven years old. The subsequent problems involving the Sixth Dalai Lama's unwillingness to pursue a monastic life are well documented elsewhere.[21]

In 1701 the new Mongolian chieftain was Lhasang Khan, who succeeded his father Tenzin Dali Khan, the eldest son of Gushri Khan, who had been poisoned and died. Together with Desi Sangyé Gyatso he ruled Tibet. However, it seems that Lhasang wanted complete rule of the country. To fulfill this aim he stirred up trouble between Desi and the monasteries of Drepung, Sera, and Ganden and launched personal attacks on the character of the teenage Sixth Dalai Lama. This resulted in a delegation from the monasteries persuading Desi to step down from his position in 1702 and to appoint his son Ngawang Rinchen in his place.

However, this did not placate Lhasang Khan, and in 1704 hostilities again broke out. The monasteries, together with the Sixth Dalai Lama and the First Jamyang Shepa, mediated, resulting in Lhasang agreeing to return to Mongolia. However, Lhasang did not keep his word. He divided his army into two divisions—one headed by his wife Tsering Tashi or Tsewang Gyalmo, the other headed by Lhasang himself—and converged on Lhasa. Desi decided

to surrender to Tsering Tashi, calculating that to surrender to Lhasang would endanger his life. However, Tsering Tashi seized Desi Sangyé Gyatso and immediately had him beheaded. When he was found, it was said that the body was still warm. This was in the summer of 1705.[22]

Two years earlier he had completed the present text on the history of Tibetan medicine. He had concluded that previous histories of medicine were not comprehensive or were unduly biased toward the tradition of the author. He first conceived the idea of composing his own history of medicine when he was thirty, however, as he had been suddenly thrust into the time-consuming administrative role of ruling Tibet, this undertaking was postponed until 1703, when he was fifty. It was to be his last composition.

## *Theory and Practice of Tibetan Medicine*

From the diverse origins described above, a science of medicine developed in Tibet from the seventh to around the twelfth centuries displaying the characteristics of these influences. The fundamental theory behind its practices is that of the elements. In his work on Tibetan medicine, Khenrab Gyatso[23] quotes a verse from *Four Tantras:*

> The body is formed from the four elements,
> illness to be cured is created by the four elements,
> medicine too has the nature of the four elements,
> body, disease, and medicine are of similar natures.

The elements here are those of earth, water, fire, and air together with the element of space. These are the elemental constituents of the body. The text continues:

> From earth comes flesh and bones;
> from water comes blood, the sense of taste, and liquids;
> from fire comes warmth, complexion, the sense of sight;
> from air comes breath and the sense of touch;
> from space comes the cavities and sense of hearing.

Essentially, nothing in the makeup of the body is outside these five elements, and therefore, all physical disorders are also of these elements. Although these five elements exist in the outer world as well, here the term

refers exclusively to the "inner" elements that make up the body. In medical terms the elements of earth and water are together known as *phlegm*, the element of fire is called *bile*, and the element of air is called *wind*. The element of space pervades the other three. These three are literally the three "faults" *(doṣa)* but are often translated as the "three humors." As noted above, disturbance, deficiency, or excess of any or all of these humors results in disease.

The humors, or inner elements, share characteristics with their corresponding outer elements. Bile, being the element of fire, is hot, sharp, and so on. Phlegm, having the nature of earth and water, is heavy and cold. Wind with its nature of air is light and mobile. The factors that act upon these inner elements and thereby alter their balance are primarily medicine, diet, and behavior. The external influences of medicine and diet are not different in nature from the five outer elements and so possess characteristics similar to the inner elements or humors.

Medicine, therefore, is prescribed to counter imbalances among the inner elements. Medicine to be taken internally can be single-ingredient medicine or, more commonly, multi-ingredient compounds. These are in the form of pills, powders, pastes, decoctions, and so on. Medicinal ingredients are mineral, herbal, and animal. Likewise, everyday food and drink possesses similar elemental properties that work upon the corresponding inner elements. Even behavior and personal routines can affect the humor balance. Therefore, treatment in the Tibetan medical system may include a combination of medicinal compounds, changes in diet, and harmonious behavior. The theory behind this is summed up in the line taken from *Four Tantras* and cited above: "Body, disease, and medicine are of similar natures."

Other treatments are in the form of therapeutics. They include the five cleansing therapies *(pañcakarma)* and the five external therapies. The first five are found in Indian Āyurveda. They are purgatives, emetics, nasal purgatives, suppositories, and enemas. The five external therapies are bloodletting or venesection, cauterization or moxabustion, fomentation or compress therapy, balneology or embrocating, and the application of lotions and ointments. Other therapies used are the preliminary internal and external oil therapies and channel cleansing therapy.

Treatment using charms, mantras, blessed substances, rituals, and astrological calculations are also common. *Four Tantras* offer a fourfold classification of the 404 categories of disease, 101 of which are caused by external demonic influence. It is these disorders that are primarily treated with such approaches, but non-demonic imbalances of the humors can also be aided

with these treatments. Medicines are blessed or consecrated to increase their potency, and there are elaborate rituals for accomplishing this. Relics that include tiny fragments of the bones, teeth, hair, and robes of great accomplished masters are used as ingredients of special pills or used in fumigation processes. Patients may be required to wear an amulet containing a mantra whose power will aid in curing them of the illness. Often they will invite the monastic community to their home to perform particular rituals, or will request the monks to recite certain scriptures or prayers in the monastery on their behalf. The particular mantra to wear or recite, or the ritual to be performed, is more often than not determined by the patient's lama rather than his or her doctor. These same lamas can be requested to perform a divination ritual in order to determine the best kind of treatment, the most suitable doctor, and even the prognosis.

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis in the Tibetan medical system is said to be by visual examination, contact, and questioning. The first refers to the doctor taking note of and examining various physical features of the patient. These include complexion, eyes, tongue, nails, and, in particular, urine. *Contact* primarily refers to reading the pulse. A visit to a Tibetan doctor often involves bringing a sample of that morning's first urination for examination followed by a reading of the pulse on both hands. Dr. Tsering Thakchoe Drungtso quotes the fifteenth-century commentator Taktsang Lotsāwa Sherap Rinchen as asserting that pulse and urine diagnosis are distinctly Tibetan and did not originate in India.[24] However, as discussed above, these diagnostic techniques appear in medical works translated from the Chinese and are also found in Āyurveda. It may be that these techniques are not as developed in these countries as they are in Tibet, where undoubtedly they are sophisticated and highly skilled practices.

Urine is said to resemble a mirror, reflecting the nature of bodily disorder. Important considerations in its examination include the time when the urine is passed, the time it is analyzed, and the food and drink taken by the patient the previous evening. Actual examination involves analyzing the color, vapor, bubbles, smell, sediment, and changes in the urine. Analysis detects the status of the humors, and in connection with various diagrams can also detect the presence of spirits.

As with urine analysis, pulse examination is a sophisticated process that may require various dietary and other restrictions for at least a day before

the consultation. The time of pulse analysis is important, the best time being early morning. The location for analysis is usually the radial artery running through the wrist. The artery on both wrists is examined by the doctor using three fingers on each hand to determine the condition of the bodily organs and to determine the balance of the humors. Different fingers read different organs.

The pulse is read by observing its characteristics. These can be, for example, weak, hollow, sunken, trembling, fluctuating, slow, fast, tight, and so forth. The pulse is also described using a variety of similes, such as like the bite of a toothless dog, a river flowing from on high, a boiling hot spring, flames, and a thorn. There are types of pulse according to physical constitution. There also seasonal pulses that relate to the elements of wood, earth, fire, metal, and water. Interpretation of these pulses requires the knowledge of the elemental relationships often referred to as mother-child and friend-enemy relationships.

Like urine analysis the pulse can be used for divination. There are seven types of pulse used for divination, known as the seven wonderful pulses. Unlike in other pulse analysis, the subject is healthy when these are read. The *family pulse* is read on a senior member of the family to foretell important occurrences that may befall the household. The *guest pulse* provides information on a guest about to visit the family. The *enemy pulse* predicts the outcome of attacking an enemy. The *friend pulse* provides information about the wealth of the family. The *evil-spirit pulse* discloses the malevolent presence of a spirit affecting the household. The *substitution pulse* is read on a healthy member of the family to provide diagnosis of another member unable to reach the doctor. The son's pulse could be read in order to diagnose the father, for example. The *pregnancy pulse* is used to determine the sex of an unborn child.

Urine and pulse analysis are discussed at length in *Four Tantras* and constitute the main diagnostic techniques in the medical system of Tibet.

## Physicians

In Tibet physicians were the products of a one-to-one lineage passed from parent to child, uncle to nephew, or master to disciple, or they were graduates from medical colleges established by celebrated physicians. Family lineages include the Sakya uncle-nephew lineage, the Drangti lineage, and the Tsarong lineage. The celebrated Jang and Sur lineages that began in the fifteenth century contained father-to-son as well as master-to-disciple transmissions.

One of the most famous medical colleges was that of Chakpori in Lhasa set up by Desi Sangyé Gyatso himself.

*Four Tantras* lists the characteristics expected of a physician. They include possessing an honorable character in line with Buddhist criteria, intelligence, an ethical vow, compassion and skill with patients, and good familiarity with the different aspects of medical science. These technical aspects include urine and pulse diagnosis, a grasp of the medical literature, the experience of having observed one's teacher, and proficiency in prognosis, the use of surgical instruments, different treatments, dietary factors, the five therapies, and the identification of medical substances.

Physicians are strongly urged to avoid becoming tainted with those characteristics that render them "butchers of lives."[25] These include treating patients only after calculating the benefit they can bring; relying on meager learning; prescribing treatments that are unsafe and untried, ineffective, or based on hearsay; and being "little more than a salesman," peddling general tonics as targeted cures.

## *Development of Tibetan Medicine up to the Present*

The present work deals with the history of medical science up to the end of the seventeenth century. However, contemporary sources such as the great scholar and preserver of the Tibetan medical tradition, Jampa Trinlé (b. 1928), director of the Lhasa Astro-Medical Institute, whose work was cited above, and the equally accomplished physician and teacher, Troru Tsenam (b. 1926), have composed biographies of important physicians and short histories of Tibetan medical science up to and including the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese.[26]

Influential physicians after Desi Sangyé Gyatso, whose biographies are described in the above two works, include the eighteenth-century Deumar Tenzin Phüntsok, who composed a renowned and very detailed Tibetan materia medica that is still in use today. Also in the eighteenth century Situ Künkhyen Chökyi Jungné, a prolific traveler, journeyed to India, China, Nepal, and Sri Lanka in search of knowledge of the five sciences,[27] including medical traditions and practices. These he translated into Tibetan, sparing himself no hardship in his efforts to enhance the traditions of Tibet. In his later life he founded an educational institute in Palpung Thupten Chökhor in eastern Tibet, attracting students from Amdo and Kham, including

Karma Ngelek Tenzin, Khamtrül Chökyi Nyima, Degé Gyalpo Tenpa Tsering, many of whom became renowned physicians in their own right. Of these, Tenpa Tsering recognized the value of propagating in Kham the *Four Tantras* redacted by Desi Sangyé Gyatso and his *Blue Beryl* commentary and so took on the task of reprinting and distributing these works in eastern Tibet.

In the nineteenth century Situ Chökyi Gyatso rejuvenated the medical college of the famous Nyingma monastery Kathok Dorjé Den in the Degé district of Kham, while Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo set up the study of medicine and the other sciences in Degé and at Tashi Lhatsé Monastery in Dzongsar. Kongtrül Yönten Gyatso studied in Kham at the time of the great Rimé movement and became a physician renowned for his magical powers. The renowned Mipham Namgyal Gyatso, or Ju Mipham, also from Degé, includes, in his thirty-five volumes of compositions, commentaries on *Four Tantras;* instructions on compounding medicines; compositions on anatomy; oral-tradition teachings on rabies; treatments for the ears, voice, and eyes; medical teachings from China; and treatments for cattle.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, Orgyen Tenzin Gyatso, physician to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, reprinted *Four Tantras* and other medical compositions and helped restore the fortunes of the Chakpori Medical College established by Desi Sangyé Gyatso. Karma Jikmé Chökyi Sengé, born in Kham and a student at the Nyingma monastery of Kathok, became such a renowned medical practitioner that he was invited to Lhasa by Orgyen Tenzin Gyatso, where he taught and raised the profile of many works connected with the Nyingma tradition, the early treasure revealers, and in particular Yuthok's seminal work on combining medicine and tantric ritual, the *Heart-drop.* He also reprinted many medical works. Trekhang Jampa Thupwang and Jabukpa Damchö Palden, physicians to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, taught bright students chosen from Chakpori Medical College.

Among these students was Khyenrap Norbu (1883–1962), who became the director of Chakpori Medical College and the Lhasa Astro-Medical Institute, founded in 1916 by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Khyenrap Norbu was personal physician to the Dalai Lama and is revered in Tibetan medical circles today. He nurtured about a thousand disciples in the two medical colleges of Lhasa, not only with medical science but with the Dharma, poetry, and grammar. He encouraged women, exemplified by the celebrated female doctor Yangchen Lhamo, to undertake the study of medicine and to halt the decline in interest in gynecology and pediatrics. He also composed many works on medicine. His students were numerous and include many of the

doctors who fled into exile in India after the 1959 uprising against the Chinese occupation of Tibet, as well as Jampa Trinlé, the author of a history of Tibetan medicine mentioned above.

Concerning the status of indigenous Tibetan medicine after the Cultural Revolution enforced by the Communist Chinese in the 1960s, both Jampa Trinlé writing in 1988 as director of Lhasa Astro-Medical Institute and Troru Tsenam writing in 1996, probably from eastern Tibet, have no criticism of the state of medical science in Tibet after the Chinese occupation. Troru Tsenam says that after the democratic reforms in Tibet, Chakpori Medical College and the Lhasa Astro-Medical Institute merged to become one. But he makes no mention of the fact that Chakpori was shelled by the Chinese during the Cultural Revolution and damaged almost beyond repair. He talks of health centers and Tibetan medical schools being built in Central Tibet, Shigatsé, and in Kham and Amdo, thereby relieving the hardship of there being no local doctors, of large medical conventions and of the opening of the Lhasa school of Tibetan medicine in 1986. He says that these new schools maintain the principles of traditional Tibetan medicine found in Chakpori and the Lhasa Astro-Medical Institute alongside modern medical knowledge.[28]

Outside Tibet, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama established the Tibetan Astro-Medical Institute in Dharamsala in the foothills of the Himalayas in 1961. It was housed in Dharamsala in a rundown wooden building probably built during the days of the British Raj. Dr. Yeshi Dönden and Ven. Lodrö Gyatso were appointed to run the medical and astrological sections. At its inception it had only two students, but it gradually developed as the stock of medicinal ingredients grew and the number of rooms, staff, and students increased. Dr. Khenrab, writing in 2004, says that twelve batches of medical students and six batches of astrological students have graduated over the past forty-three years, resulting in an output of over two hundred doctors and forty astrologers, who now work at the institute, at one of nearly forty branch clinics, or in private practices in India and overseas. Since its beginning, the Tibetan Astro-Medical Institute in exile has had pharmaceutical, research and development, materia medica, and editorial and publication departments. The astrology department produces annual almanacs, calendars, amulets, and horoscopes. Its office in New Delhi exports products all over the world. The staff now numbers 350, and doctors and astrologers from the institute regularly travel worldwide for conferences, consultations, and seminars.

Dr. Dönden opened his own practice in Dharamsala, as did the female doctor Losang Drölma Khangkar, known as Ama Losang. I remember these

two doctors fondly and with gratitude. It would not be an exaggeration to say that on more than one occasion Dr. Dönden rescued my wife and me from dreadful illnesses, including hepatitis and pneumonia, during our long stay in Dharamsala in the 1970s. For the home birth of our children in the forests above Dharamsala, Ama Losang gave me detailed instruction on midwifery, and during the birth of our first child she personally trekked up the mountain to prescribe medicine to bring on birth during a long and protracted labor. Our son was born within half an hour of my wife taking her medicine. There are many accounts of these two great doctors delivering health care to the Tibetan refugees, local Indians, and Western travelers and expatriots in and around Dharamsala.

Tibetan medical science has been on a long journey. In the distant past medical systems from other parts of the world converged in Tibet. Together with extant medical practices, they developed into an indigenous medical system that was practiced behind the Himalayas for well over a thousand years. Now that very same medical system, having survived a few threats to its survival, is spreading through the rest of the world as an alternative approach to medical treatment. It brings with it a great variety of treatments and diagnostic techniques, along with a vast stock of compound medicines, all of which testify to those great scholars and practitioners of the past who developed and preserve this unique system. This present work reveals their story.

## *Structure of the Text*

*Mirror of Beryl*[29] begins with an appraisal of the importance of the five major sciences, especially the science of medicine, and traces the origins of this science in its celestial beginnings. Part 1 then examines the root medical lineages of ancient India. It briefly documents the arising of the Indian Āyurvedic system and recounts the biographies of great medical scholars and practitioners such as Jivaka, a contemporary of the Buddha.

Part 2, on the earlier development of medicine in Tibet, initially focuses on the eighth century, and on such luminaries as King Trisong Detsen, Padmasambhava, and Vairocana. As well as showing the Indian antecedents, the author also examines the considerable influences on Tibetan medicine from China and Central Asia at this time. Part 2 goes on to deal with the propagation of medicine from the eleventh century for the next four hundred years, and recounts the lives of renowned medical practitioners such as Yuthok Yönten Gönpo. Because of the controversy surrounding the authorship of

*Four Tantras*, and its strong association with Yuthok, much of this section is taken up with an examination of its origins. Consequently many pages are spent on a presentation of the main definitions of *word of the Buddha (buddhavacana)* and subsequent treatises *(śāstra)* by Indian masters.

Beginning from the fifteenth century, part 3 of the book charts the development of the Jang and Sur lineages, the two main indigenous traditions of Tibetan medicine, and consists primarily of the biographies of the main propagators. After these accounts, the author focuses on the condition and development of medical science during his own lifetime. Here he details the Fifth Dalai Lama's contribution to the spread of medical science as well as other contemporary scholars and physicians. As Desi Sangyé Gyatso was himself a great medical scholar, as well as interim ruler of Tibet, he describes his own considerable efforts to propagate medical science, both through composition and administrative establishment.

The final topics of the book are in the Tibetan all grouped under the heading "Study of Medicine." This appears to have been an arbitrary division inserted by a later editor. The section focuses on the fundamental Buddhist practice of devotion to a master, followed by a long and detailed presentation of the three main categories of Buddhist precepts. Although linked to the topic of the study of medicine, this feels like a deliberate departure. This work was Desi Sangyé Gyatso's last composition and was completed in 1703. It was at this time that twenty-year-old Tsangyang Gyatso, the Sixth Dalai Lama, began to show signs of not wanting to enter the monastic life, and I wonder if the two are not connected.

This text concludes with a brief presentation on the ethical behavior of physicians, the correct attitudes of the student, the author's own medical practices, and a bibliography of medical histories.

## *Acknowledgments*

For research and answers to the many queries I had with this project, I spent three months at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, India. There I was fortunate to meet with scholars in various fields and to access the excellent facilities there. The obvious dedication of the staff and students has created an almost tangible atmosphere of the love of learning, and in its facilities it is surely the foremost resource for the preservation and continual development of the Tibetan sciences.

Although this is primarily a work on the history of Tibetan medicine, the

text nonetheless contains a great number of medical terms, such as the names of diseases, treatments, therapies, medicinal substances, as well as titles of many ancient medical works. Help in identification and translation of these terms has come from Professor Losang Tenzin Rakdho, dean of the faculty of medicine in the Tibetan Medicine Department at the institute. Although a busy doctor involved in teaching consultation and administration, the professor gave freely of his time during my stay in Sarnath. His warmth and kindness extended to frequent invitations to his house for family meals, helping me find accommodation in the institute, and even ministering to me when I came down with a nasty case of food poisoning.

Help in nonmedical areas of the text was provided by Geshé Losang Chödar, also of the Sarnath institute. This included translation queries in areas of Dharma, history, and politics. Geshé-la is the Tibetan editor at the Institute of Tibetan Classics responsible for the critical editions of the Tibetan text. This medical history contains hundreds of citations, and his patient efforts in tracking down the source of these has saved me many months of work. Geshé-la also took it upon himself to make sure I had all requirements for my stay in Sarnath, even down to the essential thermos flask. He was always cheerfully available for queries on identification and location of texts within the vast library complex at Sarnath. His contribution to the completion of this translation has been enormous.

Desi Sangyé Gyatso frequently analyzes the etymology of Indic terms—and in one instance an entire Sanskrit verse—resulting in pages explaining Sanskrit roots, affixes, and case endings. For assistance in this field I turned to the eminent Sanskrit scholar, Venerable Losang Norbu Shastri, director of research and translation at Sarnath and Hindi translator for the Dalai Lama. I am very grateful to him for helping me with these complicated rules, even though he was not well at the time, and for identifying the main Sanskrit grammar work used by Desi in his explanations.

Remaining translation queries were cleared up through Skype discussions with Geshé Thupten Jinpa, president of the Institute of Tibetan Classics in Montreal, Canada. More generally, I am ever grateful to Thupten Jinpa for the privilege of working on the monumental enterprise he has envisioned with the Institute of Tibetan Classics.

I thank my editor at Wisdom Publications, David Kittelstrom, for casting his critical eye over the translation and rendering into clear and comprehensible English those passages where obfuscation had gotten the better of me.

# Technical Note

THE THREE TIBETAN TEXTS of *Mirror of Beryl* used for the translation were (1) the critical edition prepared and published by the Institute of Tibetan Classics in New Delhi under the title *Gso ba rig pa'i khog 'bugs vaidūrya'i me long* (2008, ISBN 81-89165-28-3) as volume 28 of the *Bod kyi gtsug lag gces btus* series, (2) the Lhasa Shöl edition reproduced by Tashi Yangpal Tashigang in 1970 from L. P. Lhalungpa's print, and (3) the edition printed by the Tibetan Astro-Medical Institute, Dharamsala, in 1994.

Bracketed numbers embedded in the text refer to page numbers of the critical edition. All Tibetan names in the main body of text are rendered phonetically in accordance with the style sheet developed by the Institute of Tibetan Classics and Wisdom Publications especially for the *Library of Tibetan Classics* series. Transliterated spellings for these names can be found under the relevant entry in the index. Sanskrit diacritics are used throughout, except for naturalized Sanskrit terms such as sutra, mandala, and nirvana.

Where the book form of a Tibetan text is used for referencing, as opposed to standard Tibetan folio text, the reference is chapter, page, line. For example, 2.3.7 means chapter 2, page 3, line 7. When only two numbers are present, it refers to page and line numbers.

For some illnesses, no clear translation was available, and the term has been rendered in phoneticized Tibetan, e.g., *gyuser*. In such cases, the glossary contains descriptions and/or translations, with sources where available.

The glossary also contains the various remedies Desi mentions. Where major variations in identification occur or only one source was traced, the sources are cited. A separate materia medica cross-references these glossary entries to their rendering in Tibetan for easier access by researchers.

*Pronunciation of Tibetan phonetics*

*ph* and *th* are aspirated *p* and *t*, as in *pet* and *tip*.

*ö* is similar to the *eu* in French *seul*.

*ü* is similar to the *ü* in the German *füllen*.
*ai* is similar to the *e* in *bet*.
*é* is similar to the *e* in *prey*.

*Pronunciation of Sanskrit*

Palatal *ś* and retroflex *ṣ* is similar to the English unvoiced *sh*.
*c* is an unaspirated *ch* similar to the *ch* in *chill*.
The vowel *ṛ* is similar to the American *r* in *pretty*.
*ñ* is somewhat similar to a nasalized *ny* in *canyon*.
*ṅ* is similar to the *ng* in *sing* or *anger*.

# Mirror of Beryl

## A Well-Explained History of the Glorious Science of Medicine, A Feast to Delight the Rishis

Desi Sangyé Gyatso
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# Introduction

# 1. Homage and Verses of Auspiciousness[10]

Of the nature of every buddha,
an exalted gnosis all-pervading,
on the hundred-petal lotus of the navel,
in complete and perfect enlightenment,
omniscient of past, present, and future,
of the lotus family, tathāgata, god of gods,
light from your enlightened features
arises everywhere in all worlds,
immediately opening the gates
to shine on the supreme level,
great king of glory upon glory[11]
for the realms of sentient beings in general,
tormented by the five degenerations,
and specifically for those of the snowy land of Tibet,
you are the creator of all happiness and welfare.
With great compassion you perform the dance
of the red-robes, a vow-holding monk and king,
my root guru, Ngawang Losang Gyatso,
deliberately come again for the doctrine and sentient beings,
Great Sixth born of the celestially descended Nyöpa lineage,
in this life, as promised by your previous incarnation,
care for us and grant us all the happiness of samsara and nirvana.

Amid the stars of fully enlightened and perfect buddhas,
the light of your exalted wisdom of insight and abandonment,
which fill the skies of pure bodhi-mind prayers
reaching all beings fallen into the night of the five dark degenerations,
your full moon of compassion brighter than that of other tathāgatas,
supreme among the eight medicine buddhas,

from the glorious throat of Ṣaṣṭimukti
you taught the medical sutras in eight hundred verses,
medicine for the disease of ignorance,
and in the manifested place of Sudarśana,[32]
a city of qualities beautiful to behold,
you taught the gods, rishis, insiders, and outsiders
the truths of the eight branches of medical science.
Guru of medicine, grant all auspiciousness.

From the pure innate tones
representing the five types of gnosis,
which are born from the nonconceptual realm
found at the five secret places of his body,
the five rishis appear individually,
like separate water reflections of the moon.
Vidyājñāna, gnosis perceiving ultimate truth
and in essence the four brothers;
and Manasija, born from the mind,
the manifestation of enlightened speech;
by the illusion of manifestation
you are companions carrying out the Conqueror's deeds, [4]
of benefit to others, wearers of the brahman thread,
you five great rishis,[33] drench all realms and all living beings
who seek long life, Dharma, wealth, and happiness
with the rains of the ambrosia of medical science.

Four-faced Caturmukha[34] blessed by the Buddha
to recall the supreme Āyurveda,
Prajāpati, Aśvinīputra, and other gods,
the eight rishis,[35] Ātreya and so forth,
of the scriptural traditions of methods
of maintaining good health, of living long
and of curing disease;
outsiders such as Brahmā, patriarch and creator of all worlds,
the insider entourage of Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and others,
who show the path to sentient beings in these degenerate times,
all present as requestors of the teachings;
let the carriage of sentient beings be heavy with the load of happiness.

Born into the Videhan race, named because of their lofty qualities
found at the very pinnacle of the human race,[36]
the son of the householder queen of Bimbisāra, king of Magadha.
His instincts, by the power of training in former lives,
brought him to seek out and study the Āyurveda,
and perfect every branch of medical science.
He was known as Kumāra Bhṛtya,[37]
raised like a son by his elder brother
to become the greatest of physicians.
Grant us happiness and virtue in the three worlds.

Born in the southern region of Veta,
a great and precious source for the understanding
of sutras and tantras, old and new,
his Dharma is peace, free of fabrication,
destroying the torments of samsara and nirvana,
ripening fully as uncontaminated ambrosia essence,
and in his practice of medicine for all living beings,
he is as kind as the supreme buddha of beryl light.
Prophesied by the Buddha, master of the profound path,
Nāgārjuna, grant us the great ambrosia of immortality.

Born in the west, son of the purely practicing brahman doctor Saṃghagupta,
the ripening of previous faith and prayer at a shrine of Īśvara
meant that he first became learned and practiced in outsider doctrine.
Finally, his wrong views of true existence conquered by Āryadeva,
he saw the words of the Buddha, found faith in cause and effect, [5]
and became a follower of the Buddha and a great scholar of India.
Śūra, grant us confidence in Āyurveda.

Great grandson[38] in the pure lineage of the above, son of Kāmānandana,
in the sacred moon of his waxing mind of enlightenment,
the gift of the well-written teachings of Śūra sent as far as Abhirati.[39]
His moonlight perfectly illuminating the jasmine treasury,
the smile at the very essence of the eight lotus-petal branch
of working for the welfare of others.
May we be nourished by these beings,
who spread far and wide the science of medicine.

Your own form that of Amitābha,
born magically within a supreme lotus,
making the lives and health of others as strong as vajras,
not only through the medical science of Āyurveda
but also with the source of the four rivers of enlightened deeds.
Second Buddha, your Manasarovar lake of vast kindness
is of a depth hard to fathom;
watch over us Padmākara.

Master and father of every buddha, hair tied in five places,
deliberately come to and perform the dance of the robed monk
with wisdom, discipline, and goodness
to plant the code of morality within the minds of all beings.
Master of the doctrine of the perfect Buddha,
Losang Drakpa, I bow to you with the crown of my head.

Sun manifested from the gnosis of Vairocana in Akaniṣṭha,
known in the world as a translator
but in reality a pandit master of the five sciences,
I bow to Vairocana, illuminator of the Buddha's doctrine.

Sugata, guide of the world, crown of the conquerors,
Rasmi Samudgata Śrīku Rāja in the form of a king,
deliberately come to protect the people of Tibet,
object of homage, flower of the god Brahmā.[40]

In reality the sugata Vimaladhvaja,
provisionally a bodhisattva on the path,
working for the welfare of beings,
lord of Purgyal, of an exceptional and virtuous mind,
I bow to you, Muné Tsenpo.[41]

Skilled in opening the lotus gates to profound treasures
that remained a long time in the ambrosia of immortality,
their taste dripping into the honey of virtuous Dharma,
you were the incarnation of Vairocana,
discoverer of certainty, Drapa Ngönshé Wangchuk,[42]
friend to the teachings and to living beings.

Great redactor who cleaned the face of the tantra
according to the time and place in Tibet, [6]
king of physicians, Yuthok Yönten Gönpo,
in whom all tathāgata lineages are gathered,
I bow to you with reverence.

Lokeśvara, revealing three times a dance
in a pure birth under the control of compassion,
a holy being fully accomplished
in the supreme meditative retention of life and gnosis,
you too are a venerable object of homage.[43]

Of the lineage of a minister who recited
secret words with Dharma king Aktsom Chen,[44]
and from a family of royal physicians,
Palden Tsojé of the Drangti line,
master of healing, I prostrate before you.

Born into the Tongkhün[45] race from Minyak,
who with his vast knowledge in general
and of medicine in particular was of great kindness
in restoring the welfare and happiness of all beings,
truly a king of physicians,
I bow to you, Jangdak Namgyal Drakpa Sangpo.[46]

Of the lineage of the great Tibetan Dharma kings,
Holding the three great refuges as supreme,
a layman who avoided meat and alcohol like poison,
sun-like friend to the hundred-petal lotus of medical science,
Jangpa physician, Minyima, to you I bow.[47]

Trisong Detsen having taken upon his shoulders
worldly affairs and the Dharma of men and gods,
Chösang was a master physician by royal appointment.
From this physician on down to the one named Dorjé:
how could one not have faith in this lineage
of practice and the discovery of medicines?[48]

Blessed with a vision of Yönten Gönpo,
coming from the region of Surkar,
holding self and others as equal,
well possessed of the vajra of life.[49]
I bow to the lamas of the support transmission
up to Terdak Lingpa, who drank to satisfaction
from the vase of Dharma.

By the power of protector Rājānaka Vajra Mārajit,
who was entrusted with the tantra by Buddha and Padmākara,
may the host of māras be crushed like jewels,
and with feats such as the gift of removing fear,
accomplish the four activities.[50]

You with qualities of a treasure protector
and with the nature of Shingja Chen;
wrathful Apsé, like a butcher slaughtering a sheep,
your function to kill those with broken vows;
Red Jackal Face, the color of your enemy's blood:
these and other protectors, fulfill all wishes without hindrance.[51] [7]

In particular, doctrine protectors of the profound heartdrop,
the supreme and final path of this tradition,
the nine oath-bound guardians, too, protecting like a vajra canopy:
in this and future lives ensure the accomplishment
of a host of virtuous activities.

To find freedom from samsara's constant rain of suffering
and reach the supreme level of omniscience,
you need to study the sciences.
And from among Buddha's teachings, as vast as an ocean,
the science that brings to this hard-to-find human form
of opportunity and leisure—albeit only temporarily—
good health, respite from the suffering of sickness, and long life,
bringing even the vigor of youth to the elderly
and ultimately the achievement of the gnosis
of perfect enlightenment, the state of a buddha,

is a great science more precious and essential than the others,
this science of medicine that cares for all beings.

Drawing from various accounts of its history
the uncorrupted literary traditions of the science of life,
with the excellent credentials of rishi practices,
made even purer with untainted scripture
and the complete process of detailed reasoning,
this good explanation that erects the structure
of the glorious medical science tradition,
as it was done by the king of medicine,
a stainless mirror of beryl
reflecting the faces of the delighted Āyurveda[52] rishis,
with their mandalas of manifest virtue;
this great offering of the ambrosia of life,
may it become a glorious spring feast, granting long life
to all living beings here and now.[53]

## 2. Medical Science

### *The importance of the five sciences*

[9] IT IS SAID that even the Tathāgata Trikālajña offered praise in poetic verse before generating the bodhi mind. Also, for any kind of treatise, offering words of auspiciousness to the lamas and deities ensures that their compassionate blessings of wisdom are easily granted. Therefore, for these and other reasons Daṇḍin says:

> Words of auspiciousness and homage
> and a synopsis of the text—
> this is the door.[34]

With the words of auspiciousness to the lamas, medicine buddhas, and the lineages, the urging of the protectors to do their duties and a synopsis of the work, all found in the above thirty *śloka* (stanzas)—a word constructed from the root *ślokṛ,* meaning "to compile"—the door has been opened. In the fifth chapter of the *Uttaratantra,* the noble Maitreya says:

> Relying upon trustworthy scripture and reasoning,
> I teach this solely to purify myself
> and to nourish those with faith
> and with minds possessed of great virtue.[35]

With this verse in mind, I will begin. In the *Sutra of Repaying the Kindness of the Skillful Buddha,* it says in the ninth chapter, on devotion:

> If a bodhisattva does not first train in the five sciences, he can never attain the gnosis of omniscience, the highest and perfect enlightenment. Therefore, in order to attain the highest enlightenment, train in the five sciences. For a bodhisattva, gratitude and

> repaying kindness are expressed by explaining to sentient beings the things to be explained and by teaching them. How should they teach? They should teach by possessing the five sciences in order to attain the highest and perfect enlightenment.[56]

Also *Ornament to Mahayana Sutras* says in the twelfth chapter, "Searching for the Mahayana":

> If efforts are not made in the five sciences,
> even great ārya beings will not attain omniscience.
> Therefore, to refute and to nourish,
> and to attain omniscience, make effort in the sciences.[57]

Ārya Asaṅga states in *Stages of the Yogacaryā,* from his five treatises on the stages, in the second chapter on the words of the Buddha: [10]

> What level of knowledge is born from listening? In brief, it is as follows. Whichever of the five sciences is being studied, the mind is initially applied to the letters and words, and word forms, and one listens, keeps them in the mind, retains, recites, and recalls them. The understanding that arises from this gathering of letters, words, and word forms is the level of knowledge born from listening. What are the five sciences? They are inner science [i.e., Buddhism], medicine, logic, language, and arts and crafts.[58]

In the eighth chapter, "Types of Powers," of Asaṅga's *Stages of the Bodhisattva from Stages of the Yogacaryā,* it says:

> The bodhisattva seeks out a Dharma. What does he seek out? How does he search? Why does he search? In brief, the bodhisattva seeks out the bodhisattva canon, the śrāvaka canon, the treatises of the outsiders, and the arts and crafts of the world. From the twelve branches of scripture[59] that comprise the teachings, the *extensive canon* is the bodhisattva canon. The remaining scriptures should be known as the śrāvaka canon. The treatises of the outsiders are of three types: those on logic, those on language, and those on medicine. The arts and crafts of the world are many and varied. They include, for example, the crafts of goldsmiths,

> blacksmiths, and jewelers. All this knowledge can be classified under the five sciences, which are inner science, logic, language, medicine, and arts and crafts. Whatever the bodhisattva seeks is contained within these five sciences. Therefore, he seeks out all sciences.[60]

Also:

> How does the bodhisattva search? [11] The bodhisattva adopts an attitude of great reverence and goes in search of well-taught, well-explained Dharma. In brief, he maintains his reverence for the teachings in the following ways. The bodhisattva in search of just one good teaching would happily walk over a searing hot surface with a mind of great reverence if not doing so meant that he would not receive that teaching. If that is true, need we mention it is the same for a bodhisattva seeking many teachings?[61]

Also:

> Why does the bodhisattva seek out the study of the teachings? The bodhisattva seeks out the word of the Buddha so that he may truly practice with diligence in accord with the Dharma, and that he may teach others purely and extensively. The bodhisattva seeks out the science of logic in order to understand exactly the faults found in texts and in the spoken word, to defeat others in debate, to induce faith in those who have no faith in this doctrine, and to increase the faith of those who do. The bodhisattva seeks out teachings on language because with his excellent use of language that is definitive in it use of words and syllables, he will be able to compose his utterances well, and those who delight in speech will develop faith in him. Moreover, using various etymological analyses for a single meaning he will be able to make use of terminology. The bodhisattva seeks out the scriptures on medicine in order to cure living beings of their various illnesses and to benefit large communities. The bodhisattva seeks out knowledge of the arts and crafts of this world so that with little difficulty, he can create more pleasures for other beings. Also he will be valued greatly, and knowledge of arts and craft aids the practice of giving.

> Moreover, the bodhisattva seeks out all five sciences in order to complete the great gnosis accumulation for perfect enlightenment, [12] because were he not to train in all of them, he would not attain the unobscured gnosis of omniscience.[62]

In chapter 14, the "Wisdom" chapter, of *Stages of the Bodhisattva from Stages of the Yogacaryā*, it says:

> What is the wisdom of the bodhisattva? It is that which is engaging in all existing knowledge and that which is engaged in all existing knowledge.[63] It is the discernment of phenomena and focuses on and engages in the five sciences of inner science, logic, healing, language, and arts and crafts. This is the nature of the wisdom of the bodhisattva. What are the types of bodhisattva wisdom? They can be condensed into two types: those on the levels of mundane wisdom and transcendent wisdom.[64]

Also:

> What is the wisdom of the bodhisattva that brings happiness here and elsewhere? It should be known as being of nine kinds: the wisdom that is well trained in and abides in the inner science; the wisdom that is well trained in, but does not abide in, the science of healing, the science of logic, the science of language, and the science of worldly arts and crafts, and, in dependence on being well trained in these five sciences, the wisdom of the bodhisattva that brings the true teaching, true concentration, true encouragement, and true joy to, respectively, those disciples who are confused, heedless, discouraged, and engaged in the true path.[65]

Also in the seventeenth chapter, "Enlightenment":

> What does it mean to know the bodhisattva scriptures? From the five sciences, the bodhisattva receives the Dharma from others in the form of a collection of letters, words, and word forms that he retains and recites well. The meanings of the Dharma too he receives from others. Alternatively, he contemplates and analyzes their meanings himself. [13] In this way the bodhisattva knows

the Dharma and knows their meanings. In order not to forget the Dharma and its meanings and to learn new Dharma and new meanings, he perseveres in his endeavors.[66]

Jamyang Sakya Paṇḍita says:

All the bright minds in this snow mountain land
would never outshine the five great sciences;
even the light of a million stars combined
would find it hard to outshine the sun.[67]

Sasang Mati Paṇchen says:

Those who desire enlightenment
should know the five sciences.[68]

Rinpung Sachö Wangpo says:

Slaying all wrong views in the arena of knowledge
with the wrathful sciences of language and logic;
flawlessly bringing the manifest benefits
of the caring sciences of medicine and the arts;
tying the net of Dharma, kings of the orators of inner reality,
to you masters and practitioners of the five great sciences,
universal sovereigns who turn your great wheels in the
three times,
I offer my joyful praise.[69]

My lama the Great Fifth, definitively an omniscient one, also said:

In the field of the doctrine of the Buddha,
his soil made fertile by the doctrine of *pratimokṣa* ethics;
the shoots, leaves, and flowers of transmission and insight
grown by language, healing, logic, arts, and the three baskets,
weighed down by harvest of method and wisdom union,
on the definitively secret path of Vajrayana,
this sun of the five sciences correctly applied,
pulled by the horses of merit gathered in the past....[70]

Therefore, the five great sciences, praised often in the teachings of the Buddha and in reputable treatises, are comprised of language and logic to defeat perverse teachers, medicine and arts to care for and nourish others, and the inner science to understand the ultimate reality of all phenomena. Together with their five secondary sciences[71] to make up the ten sciences, they are indispensable for all who wish to become wise. They should, therefore, be studied. [14]

## *Features of the science of healing*

On the science of healing, the *Sutra of Repaying the Kindness of the Skillful Buddha* says:

> Why do bodhisattvas study scriptures of the science of medicine? They do it to free living beings from the 404 diseases of non-virtue.[72] They do it because they have great love and compassion for all living beings and want to generate faith in the minds of living beings. Freed of illness, the minds of living beings will be filled with joy, and they will constantly remember the Buddha. Then with great compassion, the bodhisattvas will bring living beings to the perfections. This is why they train in the science of medicine.[73]

Also, in *Stages of the Yogacarya* from the *Stage of Wisdom from Hearing* chapter:

> What is the science of healing? It should be regarded as having four divisions: knowledge of diseases, knowledge of the origin of diseases, knowledge of how to eradicate the disease, knowledge of how to prevent the disease from reoccurring. The wise should learn these divisions exactly as they are taught in the sutras.[74]

In the eighth chapter [of Asaṅga's *Stages of the Bodhisattva*]:

> The medical scriptures have four main aspects: imparting knowledge of disease; knowledge of the origins of disease; knowledge of the eradication of disease; and knowledge of the prevention of disease reoccurring.[75]

In the Root Tantra of the *Four Tantras* it says:

> Those who wish to remain free of illness and to cure disease should study the teachings on the science of healing. Those who wish to live a long life should study the teachings on the science of healing. Those who wish for Dharma, wealth, and happiness should study the teachings on the science of healing. Those who wish to free living beings from the miseries of illness and who wish to be respected by others should study the teachings on the science of healing.[76]

In the Explanatory Tantra of the *Four Medical Tantras* it says: [15]

> For those with human birth,
> chief among the six types of beings,
> to remain free of illness, to be cured of disease,
> for long life, Dharma, wealth, and happiness,
> the science of healing....[77]

In the Final Tantra of the *Four Medical Tantras* it says:

> This [medical science] is a protection cord without mantra,
> a magic charm to destroy the *māras* of the lord of death,
> the warrior who defeats the army of disease,
> the holder of the public purse who balances
> the excesses and deficiency in the constituents,[78]
> a sword that cuts the noose of untimely death,
> a hammer that crushes the pain of illness,
> a hook that pulls us from the swamp of suffering.
> By giving us protection from death,
> it is the generosity that grants freedom from fear.[79]

Pitṛceṭa, crown jewel of millions of scholars, states:

> Those who wish for a long life,
> for Dharma, wealth, and happiness,
> should revere the teachings
> of the Āyurveda.[80]

My master lama, the Great Fifth, crown jewel of samsara and nirvana, said:

> A treasure of ambrosia, the elixir of life
> bringing longevity lasting eons without end,
> opening the door to a gift of fearlessness,
> gained through the currency of merit,
> available to all living beings without exception...."[81]

Rinchen Pungpa says:

> The quickening rasping gasps of one's life in one's throat,
> wrought from the pain of being squeezed
> into the lord of death's gaping mouth,
> all to be relieved by the science of life,
> recalled by Brahmā through his memory.[82]

Taktsang Lotsāwa says:

> All beings are tormented by illness.
> To not seek out the science of healing, therefore,
> is to fall to the extreme of samsara;
> and to strive in this second science
> thus accomplishes the great good of caring.[83]

Since time without beginning living beings have been tormented by the five poisonous mental afflictions and have thereby accumulated a great store of black karma. When the fruits of these actions come into contact with a variety of immediate conditions and circumstances, they bring about disturbances in the four constituents,[84] resulting in illness. These illnesses have been classified as fourfold: 101 ailments that disappear by themselves and need no treatment, 101 illnesses caused by spirits that are cured when treated, 101 illnesses that are cured if treated but not if left untreated, and 101 illnesses that even treatment cannot cure. The treatments for these illnesses free living beings from the noose of Yama, the lord of death, thereby bestowing on all beings the powerful gift of fearlessness.

Therefore, it is definitely part of bodhisattva conduct and a field of endeavor for the wise. In Sanskrit this science is known as *āyurveda*. [16] "Lifespan" *(tshe, āyuṣ)* and "life force" *(srog, prāṇa)* are synonyms. "Life"

*('tsho ba, jīva)* is the basis for consciousness. In the desire and form realms, it is the basis for warmth and consciousness, whereas in the formless realms it is only the basis for consciousness. Knowledge of this life is the science of life. The Sanskrit term *cikitsitā* means "expertise in healing." It is the expertise in balancing the disordered elements or constituents of the body. It is also referred to as the "science of healing," or *cikitsā vidyā*.

# 3. Origins of the Science of Healing in the Celestial Realms

[17] A TREATISE STATES:

> Sāmaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda, and Ṛgveda:
> these are the four Vedic sciences.
> Articulation, grammar, metrics,
> astronomy, etymology, and rites:
> these are the branches,[85]
> together with treatises on love and Dharma.[86]

The Vedas, together with the six branches and the two subsidiaries, all emerged from the faces of Brahmā, because of which the text continues:

> Therefore, from the central face of Brahmā came Āyurveda;
> the Sāmaveda, Ṛgveda, and Yajurveda,
> were spoken from the other faces.[87]

Also:

> From his mouth came the brahman priestly caste,
> from the shoulders the kṣatriya lordly caste,
> from the thighs the vaiśya merchant class,
> from the feet came the śūdra lower class.[88]

Therefore, the religion of the brahman caste, whose place of birth has the highest status, is the Vedas. It is said that because they were not created by anyone, the Vedas are permanent. Uncorrupted by effort and endeavor they are said to be self-arisen. Because they are able to speak of all things, they are said to be valid. In his *Essence of Eight Branches*, the master scholar Śūra said, "The Āyurveda was recalled by Brahmā."[89] How he recalled it is taught in *Commentary on Praise of the Exalted* by Prajñāvarman:

> In this way the gods came to churn the ocean. From the ocean arose many things, including the *kaustubha* jewel and Hayagrīva. After a while some poison also surfaced. Viṣṇu was standing nearby, and the poison turned his skin black. Mahādeva took the poison and swallowed it without fear. The poison stayed in his throat, moving neither up nor down. Because of this his throat glistened with the colors of the peacock. The gods exclaimed, "How beautiful this is! From now on, it is only fitting that his throat remain this way."[90]

Also:

> The gods churned the mighty ocean of milk until ambrosia appeared. However, it was stolen by the *asura* Rāhu, who began to use it. Viṣṇu thought, "If he drinks it, even the gods will not be able to defeat him." [18] So with his mighty weapon wheel, he cut off Rāhu's head, and the gods retrieved the nectar. However, some of the nectar had reached Rāhu's throat, and although the body below his throat was dead, he was still alive, and he set off to wreak havoc among gods and men. From that time onward, he has eclipsed the sun and moon that light up the three worlds.[91]

Also, in *Commentary on Praises from the Gods* by the same author:

> This I have also heard. Under the orders of Brahmā the gods were gathered in one direction, the demigods in another. Viṣṇu took hold of Mount Mandara from above, the nāga king Vāsuki used himself as the churning rope, and the mountain was supported from below by the back of the great turtle. In this way they churned the ocean of milk.
>
> Suddenly a terrifying personification of the *kālakūṭa* poison appeared. Viṣṇu took it and swallowed it, whereupon he lost consciousness, fell to the ground, and lay speechless. Mahādeva took the poison from Viṣṇu and placed it in his throat, which then turned blue. Then a crescent moon appeared, which Mahādeva took and placed upon his own head. Then Śrī appeared, who proclaimed herself to be the bride of Viṣṇu. After her appeared Hayagrīva and the *pārijāta* wish-fulfilling tree. These were taken

by Indra and the other gods. Then a very beautiful woman appeared from the ocean. "Who are you?" they asked. "I am *surā*. If you drink me, you will become intoxicated, lose your senses, and become arrogant." The demigods were afraid to drink and so were known as *asura*. The gods, however, readily partook of the drink and so were known as *sura*."[52]

Then ambrosia arose from the ocean, and the demigods carried it off in eight great containers. The gods became greatly distressed. So Viṣṇu manifested as a very beautiful woman and went to the demigods, while Indra became invisible and waited in the skies. [19] The demigods thought that the woman was one of them and gave her the ambrosia to guard, saying "We are going to bathe. As it says in the Dharma Śāstra:

> Without washing one is not clean,
> so one does not eat before washing."

They went off to bathe. Viṣṇu and Indra took the nectar and carried it to Indra's palace. When the demigods returned after bathing, they could not find the ambrosia and set off in search of it. When they heard that the gods had taken it, they thought, "Now, surely the gods will rise above us." Meanwhile, the gods gathered to partake of the ambrosia. However, Rāhu had taken on the form of a god, and in their company he was able to drink a portion of nectar. Sūrya, the sun god, recognized him and said to Viṣṇu, "That is Rāhu!" Viṣṇu immediately threw his mighty wheel and cut off Rāhu's head. However, the head had tasted the ambrosia and is still alive today. The rest of the body died. From then on Rāhu became the enemy of Sūrya, and from time to time he covers and obscures the disc of the sun. This is the story."[53]

Also, in the same text it says:

This I have also heard. After the theft of the ambrosia, the gods and the demigods became enemies and were spoiling for battle. However, the gods could not attack because they had no weapons. Bṛhaspati said to the gods, "There is a great rishi called Vacasucara."[54] His son Dadhici has dwelled in ascetic conduct

for seventy million years, and his bones have become as strong as vajras. With these bones as weapons you will be victorious in the three worlds. Take them and you will defeat the demigods." The gods approached the rishi and requested him accordingly. In response the rishi assisted them by encouraging them to lick his flesh until only his bones remained, which he then donated to the gods. From his ribs Viśvakarman fashioned a vajra and gave it to Indra. From the bones of the lower leg he made a club, which was taken by Viṣṇu.

Sūrya, the sun god, took Reṇukā,[95] the daughter of Viśvakarman, [20] for his wife, but because his form was so dazzling, she was unable to bear the brightness and did not enjoy his company. Kuṣmāṇḍa and other celestial maidens also could not bear the brightness of Sūrya. They all fled, and she returned to her father's house. The father became upset. This distressed Reṇukā, who then assumed the form of a mare and went to Mount Kailash to perform ascetic practices. Sūrya meanwhile had set out to search for his wife, and when he learned of her actions, he went to her in the form of a horse and forced himself upon her. She protested, saying, "I will not become pregnant by another man!" Sūrya laughed and revealed his true form, saying, "It is from me your child will be born." From her nostrils the two sons of Aśvinī were born.

On hearing this Viśvakarman said to Sūrya, "If you can tolerate it, I can make you more attractive. When something has become unbearable, it has to be discarded." Sūrya agreed. Viśvakarman tied him down. A wheel was fashioned into twelve blades and his radiance was sheared off as far as his ankles. The shorn off part was thrown to earth. From then on Sūrya was known as He of Unshorn Feet. The pieces of brightness cast away were gathered and made into a wheel. This wheel was of an intense brightness and so was called *sudarśana*, "beautiful to behold." Indra gave it to Viṣṇu, and this was the wheel Viṣṇu used to cut off the head of Rāhu after he had stolen and drunk the nectar.[96]

In the fourth chapter of *Horse Āyurveda Compiled by Rishi Śālihotra* it says:

During the churning of the ocean,
the horse arose with the ambrosia;

its name was Uccaiḥ Śravas.
Its sound was like that of thunder,
and as it rose powerfully into the skies,
the demigod Bala and the god Akula seized its hind legs.
Gripped by these two powerful forces,
its hind quarters were a little weakened.
Because of this, even now, hind quarters of horses
do not move quickly, and when standing still,
they slowly lift each hind leg.[97]

This is a synopsis. The more extensive account is as follows:

When living beings first arose,
the world they lived in was a peaceful place. [21]
Then in the realms of gods and demigods,
Brahmā caused a pervasive drought.
Again the creatures of the world fled.
The gods, demigods, the *gandharva* spirits,
the *mahoraga* serpents, and the *rākṣa* demons
were also gripped and tormented by terrible thirst,
unable to enjoy their food and sleep.
Reflecting on this, the thought arose,
"By that which abides in the heart of water,
will we quench our thirst."

Therefore, the celebrated Mandara was the churning rod,
and the nāga king Ananta tied on to it as churning rope.
With the gods gathered in one place and the demigods in another,
the rope was pulled and the ocean churned,
provoking a fearsome sound.
Roots and leaves, the medicines of gods and men,
together with milk were cast into the ocean;
medicine bright and radiant, full of taste, full of virtue,
yellow flower, white sister, *aṅgulacarya*[98]
bright *jātisāra,* medicine that denies death and
cures wounds, elixirs manifested by Brahmā,
medicines strong and of unimaginable power,
all were cast into the ocean, and the waters churned.

From the waters first appeared Śrī and others;
the eight *śubha* jewels, which when prayed to in the morning,
banish the fearful prophecies of bad dreams and so forth;
then the horses that pulled the sun's chariot;
surā, drink of the gods; the *kaustubha* jewel; beautiful earrings;
medicine known as ambrosia, and ambrosia itself;
the physician Dhavantari, supreme holder of all scriptures;
and the horse Uccaiḥ Śravas, brave and strong,
with a sound *(śravas)* like thunder, like a drum,
or like a conch, like the great celestial drum,
a high-pitched *(uccaiḥ)* roar giving birth to his name,
so that the gods and demigods christened him Uccaiḥ Śravas.
His body the color of the white clouds,
this swift horse rose from the ambrosia,
from the bright ocean and into the skies,
and Bala, son of Bhānu, seized its legs. [22]
Then all the demigods left Mandara and the nāga king,
and holding on to the precious horse,
left Milk Ocean and came to this world.[99]

In *The Wish-Fulfilling Cow: A Commentary to the Treasury of Immortality* by Subhūticandra it says:

*Elixir (bcud len, rasa):* When the gods and demigods were churning the ocean, Lakṣmī arose and was carried off by Viṣṇu. A crescent moon arose and was worn by Īśvara on his crown. A vase full of poison arose. Īśvara placed it in his throat and his neck turned blue. A vase of alcohol arose and was taken by the gods. They are therefore known as *sura sura,* which means alcohol, essence of the ocean, or ambrosia.[100]

In *Wish-Fulfilling Tree of the Bodhisattva's Lives,* using the *vibhāvana* poetic device[101] to illustrate an effect seemingly without a cause, it says:

Without the churning of the ambrosia ocean
and the untiring effort of Vāsuki in binding the mountain,
who created this elephant?[102]

In chapter 89 of the Instruction Tantra of *Four Tantras* it says:

> In ancient times the gods and demigods sought out the ambrosia,
> and from their churning of the ocean arose a man of fair hair,
> fire blazing from his eyes and of terrifying form.
> Brahmā chanted *hūṃ*, the illusion vanished,
> and it absorbed into animate and inanimate forms.[103]

And in the *Essence of Eight Branches:*

> In earlier times in their search for ambrosia
> the gods and demigods churned the ocean,
> but before the ambrosia appeared,
> there arose a man of terrifying form,
> with fair hair, fire-spitting eyes,
> and four glistening fangs.
> Seeing him all were filled with fear.
> With Brahmā's *hūṃ* the illusion vanished,
> and the poison took on
> animate and inanimate forms.[104]

Concerning all the above citations, the *Kālacakra Tantra*, in verse 82 of the Gnosis chapter:

> The goddess Śrī, the horse Uccaiḥ Śravas,
> the celestial tree, the lord of elephants,
> the *apsaras* goddess,[105] the *kaustubha* jewel,
> the moon, and the ambrosia—
> if these all arose in the celestial realms
> during the churning of the ocean in the reign of Bala,
> there would have been no moon in the reign of Andhaka
> and therefore no lunar or planetary division of time.[106]

Also in the first chapter of *Treatise of Valid Cognition* by Dharmakīrti:

> They assert the Vedas to be valid,
> they speak in contradictions, [23]
> they claim bathing to be Dharma,

they are arrogant in spouting their knowledge,
they torture themselves to be free of sin:
these are five reasons why they are fools.[107]

Clearly, the Vedas are presented as objects of refutation in the Kālacakra, the literature on valid cognition, and elsewhere. However, if the previous citations that comment on the Vedas' own position and the essential meaning of the traditional explanations found in the guru lineages are brought together, we arrive at the following understanding.

In the eighteenth chapter of the *Mañjuśrī Root Tantra* it says:

During the era of perfection[108]
living beings had their own light,
they flew through the skies,
and old age and death were unknown.
At that time there were no planets,
no sun, moon, or stars,
and no realms of gods and demigods.[109]

Also:

Then the times degenerated,
and their world became unsuitable.
Impelled by previous karma,
they fell to the earth.[110]

Also:

Then came the solar day
and the light from the moon and the planets.[111]

At the end of the age of perfection, living beings began to partake of natural-earth[112] ambrosia and the like, diminishing their miraculous powers and natural luminosity, and the human world was plunged into darkness. At that time, in the midst of the great Milk Ocean, a shining crystal vase sat filled with ambrosia, the elixir of immortality. It was seen by Rāhu as he traveled around the four continents. He addressed the gods and demigods, "Friends! In the still depths of the great ocean I have seen a precious vase

filled with ambrosia." The gods and demigods wanted this ambrosia and set out to retrieve it. In an alternative version of this story, they were tormented by a great and increasing thirst, which they realized on investigation could be alleviated by "that which abides in the essence of water." Therefore, they cast medicine and various essences into the ocean, and because they wanted its essence, they needed to churn the ocean. Viṣṇu used Mount Mandara or Mount Meru as a churning stick, the nāga king Vāsuki—or the *nāgarṣi* Nemindhara manifesting in the form of Vāsuki—transformed his body into the churning rope, while Brahmā held down Vāsuki's head. Below, the back of the giant turtle Kūrma acted as a base. Together they churned the great ocean.

First an object made of precious fire-crystal appeared. Accompanied by seven horses, it gave light to the world. Living beings were overjoyed *(nyi)* and exclaimed, "It is the mother *(ma)*." Therefore, it was named "sun" *(nyi ma)*. [24] Again the mighty ocean churned, and from it appeared a disk made of water-crystal and accompanied by five horses. People exclaimed, "It is the companion *(zla bo)* of the sun. Therefore, it became known as the moon *(zla ba)*, and the god Īśvara took it for his crown ornament. Then came the great elephant Airāvata, which the god Indra took for his mount. The wish-fulfilling, or *pārijāta*, tree appeared, which the gods claimed for themselves. The goddess Śrī, or Lakṣmī, appeared and proclaimed herself the wife of Viṣṇu. Then a very beautiful girl appeared. "Who are you?" they asked. "I am Surā," she replied. If you drink me, you will become intoxicated, lose your senses, become crazy with arrogance." The demigods could not drink it but the gods partook of it. In Sanskrit "god" is *sura* and the prefix *a* is a negating particle, and so these two classes of beings are known as *sura* and *asura*.

Next to appear were substances such the eight *śubha* jewels, which eliminate disease, demons, and all misfortune; the *kausthubha* jewel; the beautiful jeweled earrings; and ambrosia and ambrosia-like medicine. These became wealth to be utilized by all.

Then appeared the horse, known by various names such as Uccaiḥ Śravas and Hayagrīva. It was able to move through the skies and was the color of the white clouds. The gods and the demigods all scrambled to gain this horse, and finally the demigod Bala grasped its two hind legs and fled to his abode.

Again the ocean was churned. From it arose a fearsome creature, the personification of the poison *kalakūta*, with nine heads, fair hair, and fire shooting from his eyes. Viṣṇu swallowed his poison but was unable to digest it, and he fell to the ground and lay there speechless. Then Mahādava took the poison from Viṣṇu and placed it in his own mouth, which turned his throat

blue. No one could overcome this creature, and so they turned and prayed to the god Brahmā. He in turn recalled a teaching of the past in which Buddha Mahāśākyamuni had conquered a similar creature with the mantra *hūṃ*. Brahmā uttered the syllable *hūṃ* and raised the threatening gesture. The body of the creature broke up and dissolved into the bodies of poisonous creatures, such as snakes, rabid dogs, and *rākṣa* demons, and into inanimate poisons such as aconite and *datura*.

Then the ambrosia appeared, contained in eight great containers. [25] According to Drapa Sherap Rinchen[113] and others, the ambrosia was taken by Brahmā for his personal use, because of which Rāhu threw his wheel at Brahmā and injured his forehead. However, Ācārya Prajñāvarman,[114] in agreement with most other commentators, say that the ambrosia was taken by the demigods. This upset the gods enormously. Viṣṇu transformed himself to a beautiful and alluring woman and went to the abode of the demigods, while Indra remained unseen in the skies above. The demigods thought that this woman was one of theirs and so entrusted her to look after the ambrosia while they went to bathe. Indra and Viṣṇu then stole the vases of ambrosia and took them to Indra's palace, Vaijayanta. When the demigods returned from bathing, they could not find the vases and so set out in search of them. When they heard that the gods had taken them, they thought, "Now surely the gods will rise above us."

When the gods had gathered to enjoy the ambrosia, Rāhu took on the form of a god and joined them. Only after he had received his share of ambrosia was he recognized by Candra, the moon god, who called out to the other gods, "It's Rāhu, king of the demigods!" Rāhu fled. Indra took his vajra, Skanda took his spear, Balabhadra took his plow-like *halāyudha*, and with whatever other weapons were at hand, the gods set out in pursuit.

The vajra that Viṣṇu carried in his hands had been fashioned from the bones of the rishi Dadhici. It was hard, reliable, unstoppable, and unconquerable. In short, it destroyed everything in its path but could not be destroyed in return. Viṣṇu also carried a wheel fashioned by Viśvakarman from the shards of the sun. It carried four guarantees. Whoever it was thrown at, it could not fail to hit. Whoever it hit, it could not fail to injure. Whoever it injured would not fail to die. Whoever died when struck by this wheel would not fail to fall to the lower realms.

As they closed in upon Rāhu, Viṣṇu threw the wheel and cut off his head. As it says in the *Essence of Eight Branches*, "When Rāhu stole the ambrosia, Viṣṇu cut off his head."[115] However, although his body was generally dead, by

the power of the ambrosia he had drunk, his head did not die, [26] and he was able to throw the wheel back and wound Brahmā's forehead or cheek. During the fight a drop of ambrosia mixed with the blood of this demigod king fell to the ground, and from this sprang myrobalan[116] and garlic. From that time on, Rāhu became the enemy of the moon, and it is said that his habit of eclipsing and veiling the face of the full moon dates from this time also.

From the pain of his wound and from compassion for the decapitated Rāhu, Brahmā entered the samādhi of peace, and by the force of having listened to a medical tantra from Buddha Mahāśākyamuni in the past, the sound *oṃ ātha*[117] emerged from the wound. This was the start of Āyurveda teachings, and all four Vedas and their branches followed. In *Moonlight: A Commentary on the Essence of Eight Branches*, it says:

> The two syllables *oṃ* and *atha*
> arose from the cheeks of Brahmā;
> these, therefore, are for auspiciousness.[118]

It is said that in the practice of recitation, the syllable *oṃ* should be recited as if it possessed the measure of the *Ṛg Veda*, the letter *u* as having the measure of the *Sāma Veda*, the letter *e* as the measure of *Atharva Veda*, and the letter *a* as having the measure of the *Yajur Veda*.

The formulation of the syllable *oṃ* according to the *Sarasvatī Grammar Sutra* is as follows. The *Dhātusūtra* says, "*Ava* means to protect, to guard." This is the root. "The *a* at the end of the root is elided." Therefore, the life-letter *a* of *va* is dropped. Then "*uṇ* and so forth always" [The *uṇ* category of affixes, and so on, can always be added to roots, regardless of tense and case]. Therefore, the affix *muku* is added. "The *ya, va, ra* of *yaj*, and so on, added to *ka anubandha* take *samprasāraṇa* into *i, u, ṛt*" [When roots such as *yaj* meet *anubandha* affixes such as *ka*, then the *ya, va,* and *ra* of those roots perform a vowel interchange, or *samprasāraṇa*, with *i, u,* and *ṛ*]. Therefore, by the process of *samprasāraṇa*, *v* becomes *u*. *Ku* follows the same rule and is elided. *U* is for purposes of pronunciation and is elided. *A* and *u* merge to become *o*. Then an *anusvāra* is added to *m* to form *oṃ*. Therefore, *oṃ* has the meaning of "protect."[119]

In the *Vajraśekhara Tantra* it says:

> The meaning of *oṃ* is this:
> it has the qualities of being supreme,

of being the granter of wealth,
of glory, auspiciousness, and merit;
it is a sacred pledge and it is good fortune,
the essence of *maṇidhārin,* holder of the jewel.[120]

In the *Extensive Commentary on Basic Vinaya* it says:

That with the letter *oṃ*
is three and a half measures
and is spoken pleasingly.[121]

Therefore, *oṃ* is spoken of in terms of esteem, respect, and praise. A passage from the Vedas quoted in *Blaze of Reasoning* states:

The syllable *oṃ* is the mystical song
of Brahmā and Vasudeva.
This syllable of Brahmā pervades all things.
It possesses the clarity of three measures
and is taught to be very subtle.
The first cause is the letter *a,*
comprising speech, *sattva,* fire, and earth [27]
and also body[122] and space.
Mind, *rajas,* and *sattva* possess the letter *u.*
The letter *m,* the creating letter, is the third—
life and *tamas*—which gathers all beings
and causes the great sleep.[123]

Also:

With senses and their objects
withdrawn like a turtle's limbs,
the self will be freed by worship while
recalling and reciting the letter *oṃ.*[124]

The syllable *oṃ,* of the nature of the three letters—*a* Viṣṇu, *u* Īśvara, and *m* Brahmā—is a formulation from the euphonic amalgamation of these three letters. This is its provisional meaning. Definitively it is described in the *Root Kālacakra Tantra:*

Brahmā is the body vajra holder,
the speech vajra is Maheśvara,
the mind vajra of the conqueror
is manifest as Viṣṇu.[125]

These three gods are also discussed in the *Hevajra Tantra*:

Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, and the others
are spoken of as being the Buddha;
Brahmā *(tshangs pa)* means free of impurity *(tshangs)*
and so refers to the Buddha;
Because he engages *('jug)*
he is spoken of as Viṣṇu *(khyab 'jug)*.[126]

Also in the *Commentary to the Saṃpuṭa Tantra* by Kāyastha it says:

The letter *a* is Nairātmyā,
the letter *u* is Vajrayoginī,
the letter *m* is Akśobhyavajra,
therefore, *oṃ* is the three vajras.
The letter *a* is the speech vajra,
the letter *u* is the body vajra,
the letter *m* is the mind vajra.
The three vajras of one nature is *oṃ*.
Being the first of the syllables,
it is the foremost syllable.[127]

The *Kālacakra Root Tantra* states "Glorious holder of the body vajra!"[128] thereby assigning *a* to the body vajra, *u* to the speech vajra, and *m* to the mind vajra to form the syllable *oṃ* as the representation of the three vajras as the entity of the Buddha. This concept can be further elaborated on using the reasoning that establishes the meaning of the syllables *evaṃ* and is seen in countless phenomena, such as the drops, moon-bodhicitta, fluid, and the bases of correspondence for the outer, inner, and other Kālacakra.

*Bright Lamp* says: "*Oṃ* is the gathering of merit."[129] In *Treatise on Various Terms* it says "*Oṃ* means great praise; it is the unchanging mantra of Brahmā."[130] Therefore, it is taught that *oṃ* means many things—auspiciousness, praise, respect, the gathering of merit, the entity of the Buddha, and so on.

The *Moon Sutra,* translated by by Tharpa Lotsāwa, talks of how the moon sought refuge in the Tathāgata out of fear of being eclipsed on the fifteenth day as revenge by Rāhu for the moon informing on his theft of the ambrosia.[131] [28]

In the *Sutra of the Great Mantra Protection* from the five great dhāraṇīs[132] it says:

"By the moon going for refuge to the sugatas,
who are destroyers of the enemies of the world,
save the moon, enlightened ones,
out of compassion for the world!
Rāhu, release the moon, dispeller of darkness,
let its light shine in the pure skies again,
bright and shining, aglow with pure light,
unfettered in the pure skies,
set free this light of living beings."
Accordingly, Rāhu begins to sweat;
he becomes afraid and, like a sick man,
suddenly leaves and releases the moon.[133]

The Yungdrung Bön work known as the *Mottled Nāga Collection*[134] says the same. In some scriptures it says that the sun and moon are eclipsed by a wolf. The *Sutra of Remembering the Sacred Dharma* states that it is the hand of the king of the demigods that causes the eclipses. There are many such provisional and conventional explanations of this phenomenon.

Also, concerning the eclipsing of the sun on the day of the empty sky,[135] some accounts describe it being primarily the moon, but brought about by sun and moon being in conjunction. These are merely observations made by the minds of ordinary disciples. The real significance is that Rāhu, in the aspect of the intermediate existence, acts upon the sun and moon in the forms of essences of bodily elements. Moreover, there is no textual evidence that counteracts the description of Rāhu's head and tail casting beryl-colored shadows upon the moon and sun's brightly vivid water-crystal and fire-crystal discs as they make their way through the *gola*[136] firmament. The mother and son *White Beryl* texts extensively explain the way that the central channel as Rāhu and the left and right channels as the sun and moon are used in the correspondences of the inner, outer, and other Kālacakra.[137]

The grandfather Brahmā taught the science to Prajāpati, the second

Brahmā. He in turn taught it to the Aśvinī sons, who are said to be last two of King Pāṇḍu's five sons: Yudhiṣṭhira, Bhīma, Arjuna, Sahadeva, and Nakula. They in turn passed the science of healing to Indra, king of the gods, and from then on it became widespread. [29]

# PART I

## THE SCIENCE OF HEALING IN INDIA

# 4. Early Indian Medical Traditions

WHEN HUMAN BEINGS were first created ages ago in this world of Jampudvīpa, they subsisted for a long time on the joys of meditative concentration, and even the name of coarse and ordinary food did not exist. Because they radiated their own light, there was no sun, moon, stars, or planets, no day and no night. They had the power to fly, and they enjoyed their bodies and pleasures on a par with with the gods of light. After some time, instincts of craving awoke in those of the race known as Manu,[138] who were the first to be born in the human realm, and they began to partake of natural-earth ambrosia, which gave them indigestion. Brahmā heard their cries of pain, and moved by pity for the beings that he is said to have created, he conceived the idea of giving them boiled water as medicine for the indigestion. Alternatively, some say that he remembered a teaching from the *Hundred Thousand Versed Science of Healing Collection* taught by Mahāśākyamuni Buddha at an earlier time, which prescribed boiled water as a cure for indigestion. Whatever the origin, Brahmā taught them the preparation of boiled water, and the indigestion was cured. From this it is well known in the world that the first illness was indigestion, the first patients were the Manu, the first medicine was boiled water, and the first doctor was Brahmā.

When the affix *an* is added to denote a descendent and the vowel *a* of *bra* is lengthened, one arrives at the term Brāhmaṇa, meaning the "children of Brahmā" commonly known as brahmans, who are asserted to be his descendents. Through their high-birth physicians, the brahmans developed and spread the transmission of Āyurveda. This can be seen in the widespread Fortunate Eon Deva tradition and the Vidyādhara Rishi tradition. These will be explained later.

## *The Buddhist scriptural tradition*

The tradition known as the Buddhist scriptural tradition is explained as follows. In this particular eon, the fortunate eon, we cannot say with certainty

that teachings given by the buddhas and the commentaries on them by others up to the era of Buddha Kāśyapa have entirely disappeared, [30] but these days we cannot identify them with any certainty. As for Buddha Śākyamuni, concurrent with teaching the four truths during the first turning of the wheel of Dharma at Vārāṇasī, it is believed that he also taught the *Vimalagutra Medical Collection in 72,000 Chapters*[139] and the *Eight Branches in 20,000 Fascicles*. The *Basic Vinaya* on the topic of medicine says, "A sick monk should approach a doctor and follow his advice."[140] Expanding on this somewhat, the third section of this Vinaya work talks a little on medicines, suppositories, and so on, whereas the bulk of the teaching can be illustrated by the following summarizing verse:

> On medicine: that which is permitted,
> medicinal fats, medicine for scabrous skin,
> eye medicines, medicine for the insane, for the monk Pilinda,
> for the monk Revati, and acidic juice.[141]

Therefore, when the Buddha was dwelling in the Anāthapiṇḍada retreat in Jeta Grove and the monks became pale through autumnal illnesses, he allowed them to rely on specific remedies, but he did not allow medicines to be taken beyond specific times. The monks remained pale:

> Ānanda, therefore, the following is permitted. Monks should rely on four types of medicine: taken at the right times, taken at specific times, seven-day medicines, and life-long medicines.[142] Foods to be eaten at the right times include pastes, boiled rice, gruel, meat, and fried or baked breads. Drinks that are to be taken at specific times include the juices from the fruit of the *chocha* tree, plantains, Indian juniper, *aśvattha* figs, *udumbara* figs, *parūṣaka* berries, grapes, and dates. Seven-day medicines include ghee, sesame oil, molasses, honey, and white sugar.
>
> Life-long medicines are of nine kinds: roots, stems, leaves, flowers, fruits, the five resin decoctions, the five powders, the five salts, and the five astringents. Root medicines include nutgrass, sweet flag, turmeric, wild ginger, white aconite, and any other medicinal roots that are not normally used for food. Stem or trunk medicines include sandalwood, clematis, juniper, deodar, heart-leaved moonseed, Indian barberry, [31] and any other stems

> not used for food. Leaf medicines include the leaves of *paṭola, vaśaka,* the neem tree, *kośataka,* and the seven-leaved *saptaparṇa,* and any other leaves not normally used for food. Flower medicines include *vāśaka* flowers, the neem tree, coriander, *śata,* and lotus filament, and any other flowers not normally used for food. Fruit medicines include chebulic myrobalan, emblic myrobalan, beleric myrobalan, black pepper, long pepper, and any other fruits not normally used for food. The five resin decoctions are asafetida, sal tree resin, lac, beeswax, and black pepper. The five powders are those made from barley, barley husk, corn smut, sesame, and aloe wood. The five salts are rock salt, brown salt, sanchal salt, white salt, and sea salt. The five astringents come from the mango, neem, *jambū, śiriṣa,* and *kośam* trees.[143]

This and further passages teach the use of medicine and the consecration of the medicine.

At the time of the middle turning of the wheel of Dharma, the "phenomena devoid of signs" turning on Vulture's Peak, the Buddha taught the *Hundred Thousand Versed Science of Healing Collection* to the supreme god Brahmā. During the same period, when King Padmaśrī had invited the Buddha for the rainy-season retreat in Matkuṇa Grove in the southern town of Sukhakara, the Buddha taught the *Clearly Seeing Knowledge Tantra* of a hundred thousand verses in 3,500 chapters to Avalokiteśvara, Brahmā, Śāriputra, and others of the Mahayana family. It is also asserted that this work is the same as the *Hundred Thousand Versed Science of Healing Collection.*

In the *Sutra of Golden Light: King of the Supremely Victorious Sutras,* which was also taught on Vulture's Peak but during the period of the third turning, it says in chapter 24 on the elimination of illness in the version translated from the Chinese:

> Goddess of the family, at a time in the past countless eons ago, [32] Buddha Ratnacūḍa, the tathāgata, the destroyer, the perfect buddha, perfectly enlightened, with an enlightenment built on the foundation of the three trainings, the sugata, knower of the world, the greatest of all beings, the charioteer, teacher of gods and men, the bhagavān buddha, came to this world. When his doctrine had become a mere reflection, there lived in the land of King Sureśvaraprabhā the merchant Jalada, who was very learned

in medicine, who had fully comprehended the eight branches of knowledge, and who tended to living beings and protected them from the sufferings of illness caused by an imbalance in the four great elements. This merchant had a son called Jalavāhana, who was fair of face and of handsome build, so that all gazed upon him with great delight. By nature he was of a quick mind. He soon mastered the scriptures, and there was nothing he did not understand in matters of language, the arts, astronomy, and arithmetic.

At that time thousands upon thousands of the citizens of that kingdom were being tormented by sufferings brought on by all manner of diseases, so much so that a joyful mind was not to be found anywhere. Jalavāhana, the son of the merchant, felt great pity for them and thought to himself, "My father, the great doctor, is now very old and is unable to tend to so great a number of sick people. I will ask him if I may study the secret science of healing from him and by so doing cure all these beings of their illnesses and bring them the joys of a long life." With these thoughts he approached his father, prostrated, and made his request in verse:

To protect living beings,
I ask for teachings on medicine;
loving father, with your great compassion,
teach me with your words.

His father heard his request and answered with the following verses:

Relying upon the science of medicine
from the essence of the Rishi tradition,
these things I will gradually teach you;
listen well and protect all beings.

Three months is the time of spring,
three months lasts the summer,
three months is the autumn,
three months the months of winter.

This is the time of a single year
explained in sets of three.

Taking two months as a single set, [33]
the seasons number six.
The first two comprise the season of flowers,
the third and the fourth the hot season,
the fifth and sixth the rains,
the seventh and eighth are autumn,
the ninth and tenth the cold months,
and the last two are the time of snow.

If you know these specifics,
you will administer medicine without fault.
Food and drink taken in accord with the seasons
produces ease of digestion in the stomach,
and many an illness will not occur.
Going against the dictates of the seasons
produces shifts in the four elements
that if not remedied by medicine,
will surely bring the pains of illness.
A doctor knows the four seasons
and must also know the six.

Knowing the seven bodily constituents,
you will administer food and medicine correctly.
When illness enters the essence, the element,
blood, flesh, bones, marrow, and fatty tissue,[14]
you must know if it is curable or not.

Disease is of four types:
wind, bile, phlegm, and their combinations;
you should know the times of their movements.
In spring phlegm is on the move,
in summer wind illnesses arise,
in autumn bile increases,
and in winter all three arise together.